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HISTORICAL SOCIETY




AUGUSTA HISTORICAL BULLETIN



VOLUME 45 2009







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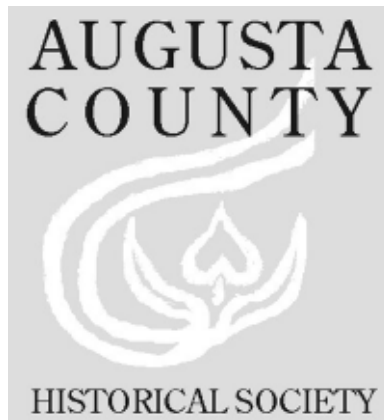


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Contents

Commemoration of the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's
Birth by the Augusta County Historical Society.....Page 1

The Lincoln Years in the White House
By Dr. William Seale.....Page 5

Why Lincoln Matters
By Dr. Phillip C. Stone.....Page 23

Notes on Trips to Virginia by Herbert Kellar
Discovered and transcribed by Robert Kyle.....Page 43

"In the Attic": Gilpin Wilson Jr.
By Beth Huffer.....Page 51

The Barbour Democratic Convention in Staunton in June of 1832
By Dr. Daniel A. Métraux.....Page 55

Augusta County Ironmaking
By Chris Furr.....Page 61

The Twilight of the Valley Campaign: The Battle of Waynesboro
By N. Douglas Payne Jr.....Page 74

Camp Rattlesnake: An Integrated Camp in a Segregated Society
By Sally Zaragoza.....Page 80

Book Reviews (By Daniel A. Métraux)

1) Harold Holzer, *Lincoln President Elect: Abraham Lincoln
and the Great Secession Winter, 1860-1861*.....Page 95

2) Annette Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello: An
American Family*.....Page 97

3) Edmund D. Potter, *A Guide to Historic Staunton,
Virginia*.....Page 98

4) Deidre Hiner, *Voices of Small Town Business: Portraits of
Monterey, Virginia*.....Page 99

5) Alice Davis Wood, *Dorothea Dix and Dr. Francis T.
Stribling*.....Page 100



6) Julius W. Gaines, <i>Old Uniontown--Glances Backwards</i>	Page 101
7) Joe Nutt & Marney Gibbs, <i>Historic Houses of Staunton, Virginia</i>	Page 103
8) Nicolaus Mills, <i>Winning the Peace: The Marshall Plan</i>	Page 103
9) Jon Meacham, <i>American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House</i>	Page 105
10) Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina, <i>Mr. & Mrs. Prince: How an Extraordinary Eighteenth Century Family Moved out of Slavery</i>	Page 106
Index.....	Page 108
ACHS officers.....	Page 115
Family Heritage Program.....	Page 116
ACHS books for sale.....	Page 117



Augusta Historical Bulletin: Editorial Policy

The editors of the *Augusta Historical Bulletin* welcome submissions relating to any topic or period in the history of Augusta County, Virginia, and its wider environs. Submissions may take the form of articles, research notes, edited documents, or indexes to historical documents. Other formats might be acceptable, but prospective authors of such submissions are encouraged to consult with a member of the editorial board. With rare exceptions, the *Bulletin* does not publish manuscripts that focus exclusively on genealogical matters. Authors should strive to make their contributions accessible to a broad readership. In matters of form and style, authors should adhere to the guidelines and strictures set forth in the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th ed., or Kate L. Turabian, et al., *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6th ed., both of which are widely available in libraries and bookstores. A style sheet, prepared by the editors of the *Bulletin*, is available upon request. Authors should submit four double-spaced copies of their manuscripts, with endnotes where applicable, and include photocopies of any illustrations. Upon acceptance of the manuscript for publication, authors must provide an electronic copy of it, as well as publishable-quality illustrations.

Manuscripts or requests for style sheets should be sent to: The Augusta County Historical Society, Attention: Bulletin Editors, P.O. Box 686, Staunton, Virginia 24402-0686. Please try to submit proposed manuscripts by June 1, 2008. Queries may also be sent to: Nancy Sorrells (lotswife@comcast.net) or Katharine Brown (klbrown@cfw.com).

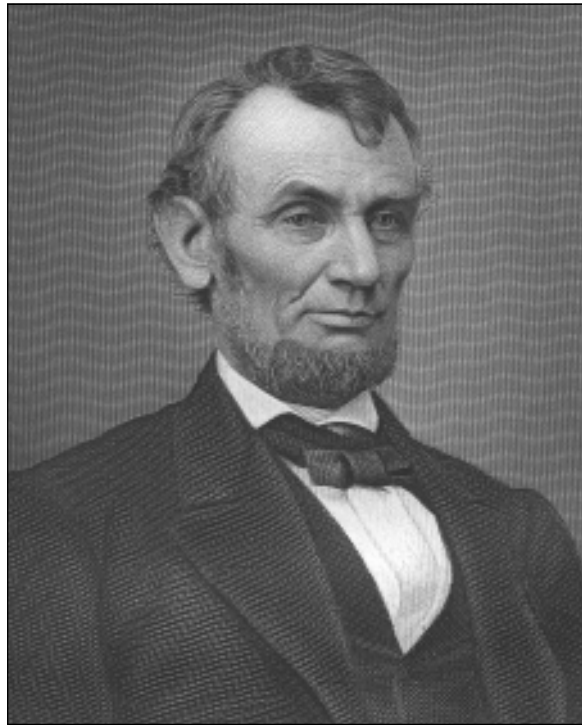




The Year of Lincoln

as commemorated by the Augusta County Historical Society

In honor of the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth and of his roots in Rockingham County (once part of Augusta), the Augusta County Historical Society decided to make 2009 the Year of Lincoln. Both the Spring Meeting and the Annual Banquet featured Lincoln topics. In addition, two society trips focused on Lincoln themes. In the spring the society journeyed to Washington, D.C., and southern Maryland to visit Lincoln sites and to trace the escape route of Lincoln assassin John Wilkes Booth. In the fall another trip visited historic Petersburg (site of a terrible siege that ended at the conclusion of the Civil War) and Richmond. Lincoln and his son visited Richmond in the days following the war's end.



Abraham Lincoln



The Lincoln Homestead in Rockingham County. Dr. Phillip Stone, founder of the Lincoln Society of Virginia, talked to the society about Lincoln and his Virginia roots at the Spring Meeting at Tinkling Spring Presbyterian Church.

William Seale autographs one of his books after talking to the Annual Banquet crowd about the White House during the Lincoln presidency.



Society President Katharine Brown poses beside a statue of Lincoln and his horse. The statue is on the grounds of the Lincoln Cottage, visited by the society in the spring of 2009.



In the Footsteps of Lincoln & Booth ACHS trip May 8-10, 2009



In the spring the society ventured north to Washington, D.C., in order to walk first in Lincoln's footsteps and then to follow the escape route of John Wilkes Booth after he murdered Lincoln at Ford's Theatre. The newly opened Lincoln Cottage at the Soldiers' Home on the outskirts of the capital city made for an interesting visit. The group also posed in front of the Lincoln Memorial.



Richmond & Petersburg at the end of the Civil War ACHS trip October 24-25, 2009



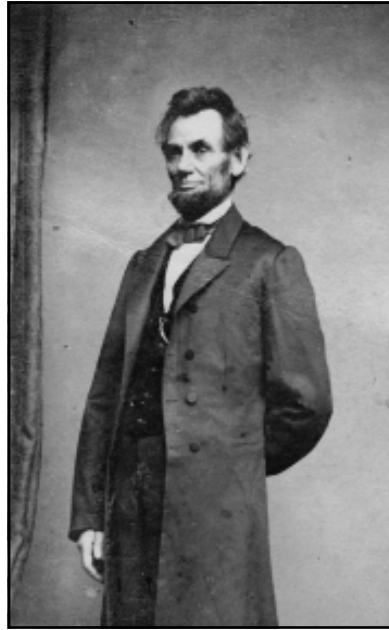
The Civil War ended shortly after Richmond fell in April of 1865. In the days that followed, Lincoln and his son, Tad, visited the devastated former Confederate capital. It was Tad's twelfth birthday. Today near the former Tredegar ironworks along the James River, a statue of Lincoln and Tad has been erected. Those taking the fall society trip saw the monument as well as the adjacent Civil War museum. They also visited the newly renovated capitol, seen here from the outside and on the inside where the group gathered around George Washington in the Rotunda.



The Lincoln Years in the White House

by Dr. William Seale

*Editor's Note: This article is the text from the speech delivered by Dr. Seale, an authority on the White House, at the 2009 Augusta County Historical Society Banquet held at the Stonewall Jackson Hotel and Conference Center in Staunton on April 21, 2009. Dr. Seale has authored a number of books including **The President's House: A History of the White House**, **The White House: The History of an American Idea**, and **The White House Garden**. He also serves as editor for **White House History** and is a former Curator of American Culture at the Smithsonian Institution. His expertise in building restoration, especially state capitols and other public buildings, has resulted in involvement with many projects across the nation.*



Mathew Brady took this Carte de Visite of Lincoln on January 8, 1864. It was one of five poses taken by Brady when the president visited his studio on that date. (White House Collection)

In the bicentennial of Lincoln's birth, there are many points of view from which to observe him. One is through his life and that of his family in the White House. Researching this does not involve the usual approach, for one is trying to re-create the house as he knew it. Documentation for the house itself is at the White House only insofar as old parts of the house exist—and since Lincoln it has undergone a major remodeling (1902) and a gutting and rebuilding within the old walls (1948-1952). The floors he walked upon are long gone; the plaster of the rooms as he knew them is gone.

It is possible to gain much from walking through the White House, for in its essentials it is at least shaped the same, but to find out about



Lincoln's White House proper, as it really was, takes the assembly of a lot of documents. Many are in the National Archives, for the White House is a very well documented house; inventories, household accounts, the bills for Mrs. Lincoln's unfortunate purchases, funeral decoration costs, reports and plans are fairly well intact. Typically, the papers of the early presidents and their associates and friends may be found nearly anywhere, for they pre-date the modern presidential libraries. For the Lincoln era personal papers were usually not collected systematically. They were stored in boxes and trunks at the White House and carried off in the same containers, the property of the president and his family.

In Lincoln's case, his surviving son Robert Todd Lincoln destroyed a great deal. Yet much survives and has been brought together in various archives, as well as the monumental central collection of Lincoln papers in the Library of Congress, assembled by his secretaries George Nicolay and John Hay and essentially reflecting what was kept by Robert Todd Lincoln. A good part of this appears in Nicolay and Hay's ten-volume publication of the 1880s.

So it is possible to re-create the Lincoln White House. But to do it calls upon a great variety of sources. I think I can say with some certainty that there would not be a White House today had Lincoln not lived there. Such judgments invite all sorts of conditions. But however broadly one might speculate, it is for certain that the White House would very likely have been abandoned and even torn down had it not been associated with Lincoln; and it came very close to both several times during the forty years after Lincoln lived there.

Before Lincoln, fourteen of the fifteen presidents had occupied the house, the only previous president not to live there being George Washington, who saw it built, under his personal supervision and seems to have known every board and stone in it.

It was an odd house in the American context, an architectural import from Georgian Ireland, but with substantial changes almost unquestionably instigated by President Washington. The form began as a fairly predictable Anglo Irish country house, two stories above a full, above-ground basement, the main floor on the second level. Builder James Hoban wanted to "sell" Washington a fine model in Leinster House, Dublin, in Hoban's native Ireland. It was the handsome stone mansion of the "first gentleman of Ireland," a concept Washington, who had some knowledge of the family of the Duke of Leinster, seems to have found rather easy to parallel between the munificent duke's house



and that of the elected head of a new country. There was, after all, no governmental model. A president was not a king.

Early in construction, fearing that the seemingly meager stone supply would not hold out, the commissioners of the project convinced Washington to permit changes. The scale of the house was reduced by omitting underground spaces and lowering the above-ground basement out of sight into an area away on the north, while exposing it on the south, thus achieving the two story façade from what would be Pennsylvania Avenue and a three-story façade, open to the sunshine, on the south. The south façade remained true to Irish precedent, but the north elevation would be a hybrid, the main floor at ground level like in French houses, not those of the British Georgians.

There were other alterations to the more classic image of Leinster House. The White House was given tremendously oversized windows to help break up its mass; the plan was greatly simplified and opened up, departing from Leinster House toward an effect more reminiscent of American houses. Washington had his way in building a house of stone, but behind the stone was brick and frame; wood floors were substituted for marble. It was a huge house by American standards. Within thirty years of Washington's death the house would be burned in wartime and rebuilt, this time with porticoes to the north and south. After 1831 the White House from the outside was the same image you know today. The presidents were still rattling around in its some forty tall rooms by the time Lincoln moved in on March 4, 1861. The residence was both home and office, a house built for a more ceremonial life than has ever been lived in it. The White House was an anachronism before it was finished. Yet it has lived on to be one of the most historic and symbolic houses in the world.

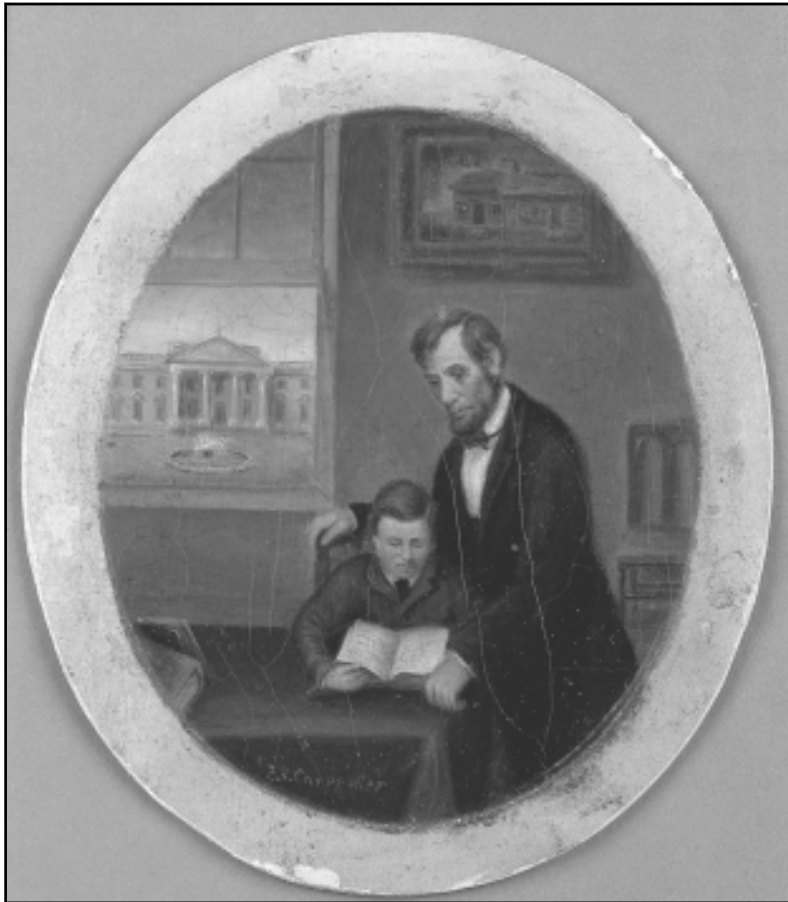
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Abraham Lincoln, a well-known corporation lawyer in the Midwest, had been a prominent citizen of Springfield, Illinois. He made no secret of, and very carefully manufactured and polished a persona from, his "humble" origins, although they were not so different, nor harder, than those of a vast number of other Americans. He turned his back on his own family, even the nourishing stepmother, opting instead to ally himself to the more genteel kin of his wife, Mary Todd of Kentucky, and friends of similar status that he had made since he had left home. Lincoln had his public face, the one we all know so well; his wife kept up appearances in their private lives as she saw fit. With a little inherited money she



added a second floor to their small wooden cottage in Springfield, moved the bedrooms upstairs, and maintained three parlors and a dining room below in the original four rooms of the house. History would make much, probably too much, of the contrast between man and wife.

Lincoln did well financially. He was not rich in the sense of having extra money, but he had political interests that always called him from the simple pursuit of money. He got his first taste of national politics in the Congress during the Mexican War, after which he returned to his law practice, always with an eye to opportunity. In the 1850s, from the boiling sectional controversy, he had emerged as a new man to challenge



This oil painting of Lincoln and his son, Tad, made about 1873-1874, was based on a photograph taken by Anthony Berger of Mathew Brady's studio. Francis Bicknell Carpenter was inspired to paint the scene after Tad's untimely death at the age of eighteen. (White House Collection)



a type of government management that seemed to be going nowhere. The Democratic electorate split and the new Republican Party carried Lincoln to victory. He moved from Springfield with wife and three sons, to take up life anew in Washington. Whether from the start he had in mind freeing the slaves will probably never be known, but he did sense the great danger to the Union of current events and prayed that Americans would listen to their "better angels." Lincoln joined a strain in American political thought going back to the 1820s, even before, that saw secession as an evil. Andrew Jackson had battled the threat of secession. The threat of secession had hovered for thirty years like a cancer that would not go away. It weakened the union's fabric and had to be stopped one way or another. This much we know Lincoln believed.

* * * * *

No question Lincoln entered a capital in emotional turmoil. To the usually benign Washington thousands of restless people had gravitated, awaiting an explosion, James Buchanan's administration had been one of political eruptions and resignations. Indeed, invitations to the Buchanan White House were very carefully stratified by political views, to avoid loud arguments and even the possibility of fights. As far as the presidency was concerned, Buchanan was as troubled as Lincoln with the threat to the Union. In his last state of the union message in December 1860 his principal point was that the South had no constitutional right to secede. The problem lay in what followed: Buchanan could see no legal way in which the government could intervene. He was an old man whose political career dated back to the first secession controversies; Lincoln was a new man with no past to cloud his approach. South Carolina cannon had been drawn up in a stand-off at Forts Sumter and Moultrie. *The old dilemma of sectionalism and where it was going was thus dramatized on the head of a pin in Charleston Harbor.*

In spite of the tense situation he entered, made all the more difficult by the hovering threat of assassination that had followed him from Springfield, Lincoln, like all presidents, had to give serious consideration in advance about how it would be to live in the White House. He had been there as a guest of Polk from time to time, when he served in Congress. It occurred to him long before he moved there that there were many issues involved in living on the spot that amounted to important, perhaps even complicated, decisions. He sent his secretary, Belgian born



George Nicolay, to Washington in advance to have a meeting with the outgoing Secretary of State, Jeremiah S. Black.

The two talked for several hours. Nicolay made notes, some of which survive, and even drawings of how things were properly done. In those days official entertaining was entirely in the hands of the Department of State, for the basis of forms lay in diplomatic tradition. One of Nicolay's sketches shows the dining table set for sixty, with the placement of the president and wife directly across the center of the table and the other guests arranged by rank all around it.

There being at that time, and for some years to come, no ongoing White House staff to instruct new presidencies, every presidency, in a sense, started fresh. Such transition as took place in that time was a very informal thing; the changing of office among friends simplified matters but that was not always the case. There would not be formal, organized transition until Eisenhower's transfer of the house to Kennedy (and for which Kennedy's father paid the bill!). After that the transition was institutionalized. Today, under the party organizations, a committee sets to work raising funds for the transition as soon as a candidate is nominated.

On March 4, 1861, Lincoln left his hotel and called at the White House. Buchanan and his cabinet descended from the upstairs office and joined the man they informally called "Uncle Abe" in the Red Room. From there president and president-elect were driven in an open carriage to the Capitol for the swearing-in on the East Portico. Their exchange in the carriage was very friendly and open. Lincoln sincerely appreciated the holding pattern Buchanan had maintained between north and south in his final months. The inauguration was mostly men. Women took part only as spectators and the honored ones, wives and daughters, were already being seated in the Capitol's east portico when the presidents left the White House.

Inaugural parades in the return to the White House were rag-tag sorts of things. The idea came from Andrew Jackson's inauguration, where the crowds followed the new president, who was mounted on a horse (and steadied in the saddle by his friends who surrounded him on foot). Lincoln's inauguration had a few floats, some military companies in uniform, and a great throng on foot joining in at the end. The crowd, some 8,000 people, poured through the north door of the White House into the Blue Room where Lincoln and Buchanan shook hands, wearing white gloves, and threaded on



into the East Room. Nothing was served, so that the crowds would not linger and the first wave would make way for the second.

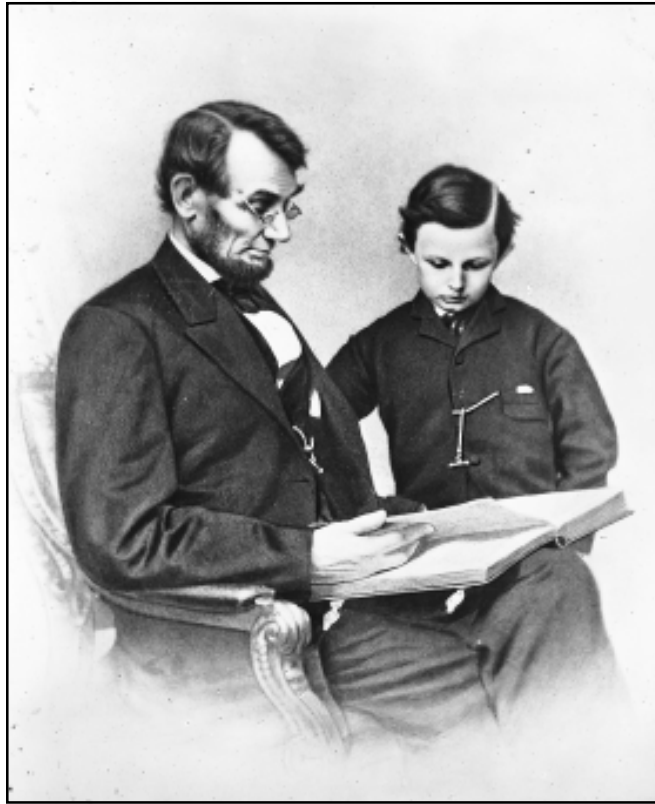
Then the crowd was gone. Buchanan went to his hotel, his rooms already emptied of his and his niece's possessions. Nothing was left of him for the Lincolns but the memory of an administration now over that had outshone in social splendor any other before it in the history of the White House. They stood quite alone in a big, echoing house that they knew very little about. There were some fifteen servants, only a few of them re-hired, all either Irish or German, black employees having been dismissed for the difficulties their presence presented to Northern guests, some of whom had probably never met an African American.

It was time for the Lincolns to look around.

* * * * *

The White House is always a little worn out, or it might better be said "wilted" looking when an administration moves out and another moves in to face it. To the Lincolns it must at once have seemed very grand, almost like a grand hotel; yet in need of repair and sprucing up. It was the former scene of the glorious social seasons of Harriet Lane, Buchanan's youthful redheaded niece. Her experience with her uncle at St. James's in London, and her intimacy with the royal family, brought panache to a household that would have had very little if left to Uncle James—a man who, as minister plenipotentiary to Britain, was denied admission to a royal function because he was dressed improperly. Many years later characters like Jefferson Davis and General U.S. Grant would recall the color and splendor of "Miss Lane's court." Mary Lincoln had the obstacle of following Miss Lane to overcome.

One entered the house from the north in an echoing hallway forty feet wide, with an eighteen-foot ceiling hung with heavy gas chandeliers. Immediately across from the north door was a three arch arcade, supported by Pennsylvania blue marble columns; window sash, like an ordinary greenhouse, was fitted between the columns all across, with French doors in the middle that opened into the Transverse Hall. Along this secondary hall were the parlors, Blue, Red and Green; at its left end was the East Room and the right concluded in an odd double flight staircase to the second floor. Flanking the stairs were two dining rooms, the public or State Dining Room on the South



The painting depicted on page 8 was inspired by this photograph of Lincoln and his son, Tad, taken by Anthony Berger of the Mathew Brady Studio in 1864. (Library of Congress)

and the family dining room on the North, looking out through trees to Pennsylvania Avenue. A small corridor beside the family dining room contained a narrow, twisting stair that linked the basement kitchens to the attic. Lincoln learned early that he could thread this back stair unseen, when he wished to leave the house.

The parlors were about like one might have expected in the house of a rich banker or businessman. Wallpapered in French papers, the various papers, upholsteries, and carpeting followed the color themes of the rooms, while big mirrors reflected it all in that Versailles sort of way so loved in the period. The flavoring is delightfully captured, ironically perhaps, in the Confederate White House in Richmond. Showy and opulent was the style of the time known as "French Antique" in the era of Napoleon III. Harriet Lane had refurnished the Blue Room in heavy, gilded furniture in this style, climaxed by a circular sofa or ottoman that is mentioned in probably every visitor's diary who visited the White House at that time. The State Dining Room and East Room were large rooms, their carpets worn in paths, their wallpaper smudged where



tens of thousands of visitors to public receptions had treated them with the greatest familiarity. During the day the shutters were closed and the rooms had a shadowy presence, the daylight dancing in white lace curtains. At night the gas was lighted and a yellow glow pervaded and played in the crimson and green and royal blue silks, the marble, and the rosewood. In summer the curtains and rugs were removed, slipcovers installed and the house very much closed against the Washington heat.

Upstairs the family lived in the west end of the second floor, while the east end was given entirely to the president's offices. A long, dark, windowless passage connected these two parts of the house. The personal rooms offered five bedrooms and a few dressing rooms that in a pinch could have beds set up in them; all of the bedrooms had high post beds with curtained testers. The only sitting room upstairs was the oval library over the Blue Room. Its relatively low ceiling made it seem cramped, compared to the lofty rooms below. There was a household collection of books in that room, funded by the Congress for Mrs. Millard Fillmore, wife of President Fillmore in 1852. Lincoln's usual reading was in one book, the Bible. It was his favorite and he read it often. But he also read Shakespeare and the various poets at times. Mary Lincoln, an avid pleasure reader, loved novels and poetry. In their love of books, the Lincolns were a companionable couple.

At best the office was cramped. No details survive of how Lincoln or Nicolay adapted the office, but the suite was changed during the first few months. As we all learned in school, office and favor seekers flooded to the White House to profit from the new president and the new national party. In theory a new party emptied the federal payroll and replaced every employee. This never happened in fact, but there were many changes, and Lincoln's callers were not opposed to suggesting where changes might be made. Favor seekers came by the thousands. No exception and perhaps the best example of all, was Benjamin Brown French, who wished to be commissioner of public buildings, one of the most desirable federal jobs in Washington and one he had held under President Pierce. He called constantly, stood in line, waited as the procession moved him closer and closer, up the long stairs, through the ground glass doors and into the reception room. He wrote poems glorifying Lincoln and presented himself as a model sycophant, which Lincoln readily recognized.

The office was a simple matter. There being little actual office furniture at the time, imagine rooms with domestic style chairs and cabinets



and an occasional very basic sort of table or cupboard commissioned from a carpenter. The cabinet table was such an object, a long table with drawers, probably replacing an old one, a table much like a kitchen table lost in the 1814 fire, that had been built for Jefferson. Each cabinet member had a drawer at that long table, and when he arrived for a cabinet meeting he found that Nicolay had put in the drawer any correspondence the president was turning over to the cabinet member for action.

The cabinet room and Lincoln's own office were one and the same room, today known as the Lincoln Bedroom. The reception room was merely a walled off end of the central Transverse hall of the upstairs. Adjacent on one side to Lincoln's office and cabinet was a workroom with a desk and a head high temporary partition Lincoln had built creating a corridor through which the president could pass unseen into the family library and thus the family quarters. On the other side of the office and cabinet, on the southeast corner of the house, was Nicolay's office, where most of the files were kept in boxes. This room had a corner partitioned off for a watercloset, the only bathroom available in the office section. Across the hall was the bedroom of Nicolay and his assistant John Hay and Hay's office, which matched Nicolay's. The two secretaries became as intimate to Lincoln as younger brothers. Yet even the pressures of work drove them to accept new jobs at the end of Lincoln's first term. Both were preparing to leave for diplomatic jobs in Europe when they received the news that he was dead.

Thus, five rooms and a hall was the extent of the office suite used by Lincoln in the Civil War. In the office we know as the Lincoln Bedroom his meetings took place; here he tenaciously defended the Union and held the Confederacy to the level of a rebellion; and here he at least finalized the Emancipation Proclamation and for certain signed it on New Year's Day 1863 after a long and harrowing reception in the East Room below. Here were freed the slaves in the states in rebellion.

I'll not reiterate tonight in Staunton the political and war biography of Lincoln. The subject is the White House. And it is unique about the White House, among palaces of the world, that the goings-on behind closed doors are an eternal fascination.

* * * * *

Abraham Lincoln was fifty-two and Mary Todd Lincoln was forty-one, about a decade his junior. They had married November 4, 1842. Of their four sons, three lived to move to the White House and



one would die there. The eldest, Bob, was seventeen; the middle boy Willie was ten; Thomas or Tad, the youngest, was seven. Lincoln settled in immediately to a business life largely centered in the White House. Most people he needed to see or wanted to see him, came to him in that upstairs office. Not that he never left, because he did, but the fears of his guards for his life were very great, especially at the first. Within the iron fence of the White House and inside its thick walls, his protectors felt that he had the maximum protection (not different at all from the point of view of the Secret Service today.) Bob was attending Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, preparing to meet the entrance standards at Harvard. He was not a good student, nor did he have the vibrancy of his parents. But he was rarely at the White House. After Harvard, in reaction to public comment, he joined the army as a commissioned member of Grant's staff. He would be present at Appomattox.

The Lincolns decided to school the younger boys at home and employed a tutor, a good-natured Scot named Alexander Williamson, of whom Mrs. Lincoln would write he was "a close friend of our family." He needed to be even-tempered for no two greater brats ever lived in the White House than Willie and Tad. They had the run of the house. Willie was bookish and smart. Tad was not so smart and not bookish at all, but had a way with people. The apple of his father's eye, Tad interrupted cabinet meetings, pressed official visitors for money, played jokes, waved Confederate flags at military ceremonies and made himself a general pest. In a narrow upstairs north side room where one day Ronald and Nancy Reagan would keep her exercise machines, Tad built a theater, with scenery and curtains and put on performances, command performances for the household. Willie would die in the White House in the winter of 1862, drawing Tad and his parents together more closely than ever.

The Lincolns spent what seems to have been a good bit of their time together. As the war got started and moved along, Lincoln was of course occupied and at intervals very tense. They sat in the oval library and read. Some guests came to call but very few. Family members among the Todds came for weeks on end, but more at the first than later on. Mrs. Lincoln's sisters, Elizabeth Todd Grimsley, a wealthy Springfield matron, in whose home the Lincolns had married, and more importantly, Emilie Todd Helm, a military wife, who came to the White House with her children in distress following the



death of her Confederate husband General Ben Helm, killed at the battle of Chickamauga in 1863. Yet isolation in the White House is always great. As the war progressed the nation changed in many ways the Lincolns could not have known. When Mrs. Lincoln stepped from the White House, following his death, she was astonished and dismayed by the new world she encountered

Mary Lincoln was not a serene character in any sense. Most who venture to guess say that she was probably manic, in our terms. She had never entirely accepted the loss of a young son, Eddie, back in Springfield. The loss of Willie at the White House pushed her over the edge. Meanwhile she attempted to fill her role as what we would call “first lady.” For so frail a psyche this was a perilous road. She might better have been a recluse like Franklin Pierce’s wife, or a quiet scholar like Mrs. Fillmore. But it was Harriet Lane, whose golden reign still reflected on the White House, that she insisted upon challenging, a woman twenty years her junior, a live-wire who had been everywhere in Washington having fun, bringing young crowds to dance away the colored chalk decorations she had ordered created on the floors of the East Room.

Harriet’s gold-leaf Blue Room was the first to be outdone. The government provided \$20,000 a four-year term for incidentals of the presidency. This usually went to paying for entertainment, wallpaper, and a variety of things. For Mrs. Lincoln the money became cash on hand to fund redecoration. There was a room upstairs where in Harriet Lane’s time Edward Albert, Prince of Wales and son of Queen Victoria, had spent a few nights on his American tour in 1860. That the heir to the British throne had slept there recommended the room to Mrs. Lincoln for major glorification, proof of her sophisticated taste. The White House originally had a state bedroom, a huge room over the entrance hall, but in 1861 there was none.

Mrs. Lincoln refurnished the room through a large furniture store in Philadelphia. She spent thousands for carved rosewood furniture, draperies, wallpaper, and carpeting. The French style bed was monumental—you know it well as today’s “Lincoln bed.” It was trimmed out in yellow and purple silk, fringed curtains falling from a high gold crown, and its ample interior piled with feather down mattresses bound in fine linen. When the room was done, Mrs. Lincoln was shown the invoices from Philadelphia. She convinced Mr. French, the new public buildings commissioner to stuff them into a drawer.

Lincoln had finally appointed French because he seemed to get



along well with Mrs. Lincoln. But in this case French was allowing a wound to fester. Soon enough the storeowner began to pressure for payment. "Now go Mr. French," said Mrs. Lincoln, "and try to persuade him to pay the bill." Benjamin B. French then ventured alone to lay the invoices before the president, who quickly saw that for the Prince of Wales Room and the new carpet in the East Room and a few other purchases, the congressional appropriation of \$20,000 had been much overrun.

Lincoln exploded: "It would stink in the nostrils of the American people to have it said that the President of the United States had approved a bill over-running an appropriation of \$20,000 for flub dubs for this damned old house, when the soldiers cannot have blankets." The president raved on, "It is her fault," meaning Mrs. Lincoln. "It was all wrong to spend one cent at such a time and I never ought to have had a cent expended, the house was furnished well enough, better than anyone we ever lived in, and if I had not been overwhelmed with other business I would not have had any of the appropriation expended, but what could I do? I could not attend to everything!"

The cost was ultimately broken up and buried in government expenses, impossible to trace every bit.

The demand for presidential grandeur, always present at the White House (if rarely openly expressed!), did not weigh so much on a busy Lincoln as it did his wife. She was the first president's wife freely mentioned in the press. Reports were of a sort that would probably have sparked a duel in an earlier time; but as he would belong to the ages, she belonged to the wags—and she never understood it. News reports were sometimes unkind, sometimes fatuous, which would one day pursue her with hatred, but reported in 1861 that "she possesses that grace and elegance associated with the Empress of the French," certainly a most unlikely comparison to Eugenie.

A White House season extended from middle December until May. It was never in those early days called "the Season," although it was a period of months during which the White House was central to a lively social period that included the legations, politicians, and a scattering of local residents. The Washington season was greatly interrupted by the war, because most of its leading lights were Southern sympathizers. William W. Corcoran, the king of it, for example, moved to France and protected his Lafayette Square mansion by loaning it to the French minister. Many left who had led society. Some such as Mrs. Taylor remained, insisting that she would not remove



her summer slipcovers until the South was triumphant; and they were still in place in 1892 when she died.

In the midst of social upheaval, then, came Mrs. Lincoln to rule over the White House, which was the hub around which all the other social activities were scheduled. No invitations to anything else were issued until the White House season was announced. Regular dinners were for from forty to sixty guests, but there were smaller ones. The cooking was French, some eight wines were poured. A caterer was used for the big dinners. Lincoln was usually too preoccupied to be much fun; he rarely presented a toast and nibbled at his meat course and drank a glass of wine. Every occasion was politically charged. It was after dinner early in the war, in the Red Room, while the ladies had gone upstairs, that he confronted his cabinet with the idea of changing command of the army. General Scott, the commander he had inherited, was old and miserable with gout, had had to be taken from the dinner table and put to bed upstairs. The problem had become obvious.

Dinners were not always state dinners. A state dinner was official, involving the diplomatic community and thus the representatives of the kings of Europe. All other dinners were considered private, but were still all business. These functions were varied with receptions. There were two traditional receptions for the public: New Year's and the Fourth of July. On New Year's Day the diplomats called first, at 11 a.m., and at noon the front doors were opened. Six thousand was an average attendance, all eager to shake the president's hand. Lincoln was very tolerant. Mrs. Lincoln retreated behind a large bouquet and a marble table and nodded. Lincoln's hands were so sore and bruised after the New Year's Reception in 1863 that he rubbed them and stretched them before signing the Emancipation Proclamation, to be sure that by a shaky signature it did not appear that he had hesitated.

In managing so many White House activities, Mrs. Lincoln was encumbered by an utter lack of ability in judging subordinates and servants. She became too familiar with them and never entirely knew what she wanted; any mistake was blamed on the employee. Her seamstress, Elizabeth Keckley, a former slave from Culpeper who had come to Washington to become a fashionable dress maker, became close to Mary Lincoln for awhile, but it is fairly certain that as a domestic employee she would not have lasted long. All the Irish and Germans soon left. The butler, Richard Goodchild, a trained British



retainer, felt ill-used and departed. Pierre Vermereu, the French speaking steward, left to join the army; Mrs. Lincoln seemed to always call him Mr. Vermin but did give him a favorable recommendation.

She replaced these people with an inexperienced, self-serving group that gave her trouble from the time they entered in 1862 until the day she left. A disagreeable Mary Ann Cuthbert was elevated from Buchanan's laundry to housekeeper. Thomas Stackpole, a shady river captain on the Potomac, came into great authority in the house, Mrs. Stackpole made steward of the house and in power over its management, subject to Mrs. Lincoln's orders. The most notorious, however, of all the domestic employees was John Watt, the gardener, who had actually come to work there in the 1850s under Franklin Pierce. Watt found that working in the conservatory attached to the west terrace of the house brought him into contact with the family more closely, for this was the favorite sunny retreat especially in winter. He found it easy to draw close to Mrs. Lincoln, who was talkative and knew little restraint, and through acquaintance with her, gained free access to the upstairs. The other employees feared him. More on him later.

If a rather sad line up of employees encumbered Mrs. Lincoln's best efforts, she made even more dangerous friends. She enjoyed silly, harmless gossip, for which the wives of her husband's associates held her in scorn as undignified. Her favorite subject was royalty and court life in Europe. Among the parlor friends she assembled was one Henry Wikoff, known as "the chevalier," whom Matthew Brady pictures in a portrait photograph as a smallish man, with oiled hair and elegant clothes. Mrs. Lincoln found him absolutely hilarious, with his stories of earls, dukes, queens, and kings he knew personally, what Queen Victoria said and what this or that Bonaparte had done. The true extent of his European involvement has never been determined, but he cut quite a swath in Washington and gained free access to the White House.

Except for their showing Mrs. Lincoln to the public in the determined, moralistic context of wartime as a flippant first lady, none of these friends mattered very much in the big picture. However, when Lincoln opened an issue of the *New York Herald* and found word for word a speech he had not yet delivered, he summoned the police. The investigative wheels turned quickly. The individual who had sold the speech to the *Herald* was Wickoff. The chevalier, protesting his world rank, was hastily dispatched to Old Capitol Prison, where he underwent hours of questioning by police, who became certain that he was so harmless he could not have acted alone. At last he yielded,



he had received the copy from John Watt, the gardener, who had taken it from Lincoln's desk and copied it.

As for the villain, Watt, he seems to have been scared pale when confronted and begged to join the army and serve his country. He was not heard of at the White House again. Wickoff, undaunted, dared to call at the White House on his release from jail. Lincoln was told by a doorman that he was in the house and personally stormed into the Red Room, silenced the laughter and escorted Wickoff to the door, ordering in the presence of a crowd in the entrance hall that he never appear at the White House again.

News of this slipped into the press. Mrs. Lincoln was soon clothed in the reputation of a Confederate spy. When her young sister Emilie found refuge there with her children from war-torn Georgia, public opinion further confirmed Confederates in the White House (in fact Lincoln himself: who much loved Emilie and had offered her husband, whom he admired, a commission in the Union army, ordered army officials to send the widowed Emilie to him).

* * * * *

Outside the Season, the Lincolns, like Buchanan before them, moved to a comfortable cottage on the outskirts of town at the Soldiers' Home. The Soldiers' Home was an institution founded for old and infirm soldiers by General Winfield Scott using prize money he had received in the capture of Mexico City. The cottage was a house built by the Riggs family on a summer estate and it was not habitable in winter. It was a perfect escape, a house more typical of what Lincoln the lawyer in private practice might eventually have called home, with parlor, dining room, deep, vine-hung porches. Every morning the president entered his carriage, and was accompanied by fifty armed cavalry to his labors at the White House. Mrs. Lincoln remained at home with the children.

A great deal of history must have taken place at the Soldiers' Home but little has been recorded. Lincoln took his major work there, those matters he had to attend to himself. It was the Camp David of its time and would remain that until the 1870s. It is believed that Lincoln drafted the Emancipation Proclamation in the cottage. It is known that someone sabotaged his carriage there and it fell apart, toppling driver and Mrs. Lincoln to the ground. That was on the day of the news of Gettysburg. No one was seriously hurt, but it confirmed the ever presence of danger.



The greatest contribution of the cottage was that it took the family out of the city into a hilly area away from bad vapors that came up from the swamps south of the White House, avoiding malaria and other summer diseases. It served to remove Mrs. Lincoln from controversy, and when Willie died in 1862, and the visage of Eddy returned from the mists of painful memory and tormented her nearly to death, the cottage was her asylum. In its parlor she received mediums and fortunetellers, hoping they would connect her to Willie on the other side. At least one seance was held in the Red Room at the White House. The president is said to have attended one session and turned on the gaslight to reveal all sort of theatrical contrivances to trick his wife into thinking she had reached Willie.

Lincoln, so consumed by the presidency, was no companion for her during her times of anguish. There is a certain coldness in his treatment of her. It was not a happy family circle, if not always unhappy. Mrs. Lincoln needed time and attention to extricate herself, yet the few who might have helped her felt presumptuous in trying. She turned to people close at hand who had no interest in her beyond her position. Mary Lincoln never learned to separate the two. The sister Emilie was shocked to see her in 1863 and how she had deteriorated, but left her to return home. Even Lizzie Keckley, who was with her and paid secretly by the government to “handle” her after her husband’s death, quickly published a memoir of Mrs. Lincoln that is anything but flattering and probably suggests a greater intimacy than actually existed between the two. Few people felt sorry for Mary Lincoln.

* * * * *

The family, in its four years and nearly six weeks at the White House suffered a long chain of tragedies. These began early. One of the great stories of Virginia, that took place in Alexandria on May 24, 1861, early in the morning after Virginia had seceded from the Union. Among those ordered to occupy Alexandria, Colonel Ellsworth boldly removed the Confederate Flag from the Jackson House Hotel on King Street, only to be shot by the hotel owner, who was in turn shot by Ellsworth’s men. Ellsworth was the first Union casualty of note in the Civil War. He had gone to Springfield as a volunteer to guard president-elect Lincoln and became so close to the family that he lived with them in the White House, sharing a room with their son Bob. His death bitterly shocked the Lincolns, who had his body moved to the East Room and held the funeral there.



That was the first tragedy. More were to follow, some of which we've touched upon, tragedies and unfortunate situations. They seemed to abound. But as the nation was suffering the war, it watched the melodrama at the White House and closely identified with the Lincolns. As the decades passed after the war, efforts to demolish or abandon the White House were always stopped by public opinion. General Grant first called it "Lincoln's house" and refused a project to build another one. Finally Theodore Roosevelt in 1902 ended the danger for all time by a renovation of the house that preserved and restored it, yet made it function for the modern presidency. President Truman would do the same, only more radically in steel and concrete, rebuilding the President's House as the Marshall Plan was rebuilding Europe.

At every juncture the stories come back. Theodore Roosevelt said that he could almost see Lincoln shuffling down the halls upstairs in the dark night, his face furrowed with worry. President Truman went farther and insisted that he'd seen the railsplitter's ghost in the room he created and called the Lincoln Bedroom. Domestic employees at the White House are very wary of entering the Lincoln Bedroom alone and have been for years.

The Lincoln hold on the White House, though, has much to do with the hold the White House has on us. It was the stage of his presidency, the setting of his personal hardships and those of his family. Lincoln had a certain respect for what he called to a group of young people "this big white house." Mary Lincoln's assessment was different. She lived on after it was all over and spoke of "that great whited sepulcher, it broke my heart."

This Mathew Brady photograph shows the White House in the 1860s when a bronze statue of Thomas Jefferson was a prominent fixture in front of the Executive Mansion. The statue arrived at the request of President James Polk in 1847 and was returned to the U.S. Capitol by President Ulysses Grant in 1874. (White House Collection)





Why Lincoln Matters

by Dr. Phillip C. Stone

In 2009, the Augusta County Historical Society celebrated the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth by offering several programs and trips. The first event that focused on Lincoln occurred at the historical society's spring meeting on Sunday, March 29, 2009, at Tinkling Spring Presbyterian Church. Bridgewater College President Phillip Stone, a Lincoln historian and founder of the Lincoln Society of Virginia, gave the presentation. Stone also offered an update on the Lincoln Homestead preservation effort. His family owns the farm in Rockingham County (then part of Augusta County) where Lincoln's great-grandparents settled in 1768 and efforts are underway to restore the property.

Abraham Lincoln ranks as the most respected American President and the President deemed most effective and able. Streets and parks throughout the world are named in his honor. Almost all literate people know his name and something of his life. The significant details of his life are well known: his log cabin background, his successful effort to save the Union, his emancipation of the slaves, the *Gettysburg Address*, and his assassination. Less well known is the fact that his ancestral roots run deep into Virginia, the heart of the Confederacy.

In 1768, John Lincoln, referred to as "Virginia John" by Lincoln genealogists and historians to distinguish him from many other family members of the same name, moved to Virginia from Berks County, Pennsylvania, with his wife Rebecca Flowers Morris and their nine children, the oldest of whom was Abraham Lincoln. This Abraham Lincoln was known as "Captain" Abraham Lincoln because of his service in the American Revolution, while a resident of the Shenandoah Valley. Captain Abraham's brother, Jacob, also served in the Revolutionary militia.

Virginia John and Rebecca Lincoln, together with their nine children, settled on a 600-acre tract of land acquired by the Lincolns in what is now Rockingham County, about six miles north of Harrisonburg. Captain Abraham was then twenty-four years of age. After he came to Virginia, he married Bathsheba Herring from Cooks



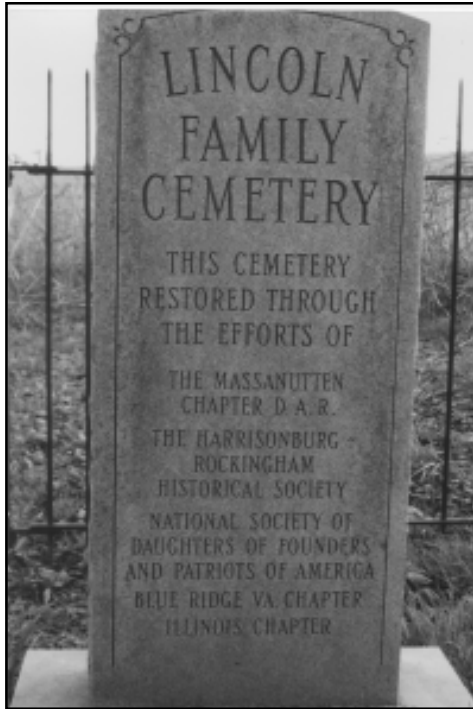
Creek, Dayton, Virginia. While living on Linville Creek, Captain Abraham and Bathsheba Herring had all five of their children, including their youngest child, Thomas, the president's father, born in 1778.

About 1782, Captain Abraham Lincoln moved to Kentucky to the community now known as Springfield.. He sold his farm of 200 acres in Virginia acquired from his father's tract a few years earlier. In 1786, he was killed in Kentucky in an Indian ambush. His grave is not precisely marked but because a stone bearing his initials was uncovered by a farmer plowing a field many years later, the approximate location is known.

Thomas Lincoln, the president's father, eventually moved to Elizabethtown, Kentucky, where he met Nancy Hanks. They become the parents of President Abraham Lincoln and that part of the Lincoln family is quite well known. President Lincoln's sister Sarah died in childbirth; no heirs of hers survived. Abe Lincoln's infant brother died soon after birth. Only the President's line prevailed. His last descendant, a great-grandson, Robert Todd Lincoln Beckwith, died in 1986 in Springfield, Virginia, as an old man. Interestingly, Beckwith had married a young German woman who was maintaining his home for him. When she announced she was pregnant with his son, an apparent direct descendant of President Lincoln, Beckwith proved that such paternity was medically and physically impossible. He prevailed in divorce proceedings on grounds of adultery. Rather than submit the child to a blood test, the divorced wife returned to Germany. She reappeared when



Lincoln Family Cemetery in Rockingham County. (Photo by Daniel Métraux)



Descriptive marker at the Lincoln cemetery and the stone of the President's ancestor, Abraham Lincoln. (Photos by Daniel Métraux)

Beckwith's estate (inherited through the Robert Todd Lincoln family) of millions of dollars was settled, naturally, making a claim that needed to be accommodated to settle the estate. It is certain that the son of the German woman is not a descendant of the President. That line has died out.

Returning to the Virginia John Lincoln family, one of the other children of Virginia John and Rebecca Lincoln, Jacob, brother of Captain Abraham, and a soldier who was present at the Yorktown surrender of Cornwallis, became the progenitor of most of the Lincolns who remained in Virginia. Jacob built a beautiful two-story house within a few yards of his parents' home around 1800. That dwelling still stands and is known as the Lincoln Homestead. Virginia John Lincoln lived the rest of his days (about twenty years) on Linville Creek, and at his death was buried in what has become known as the Lincoln Cemetery. Five generations of Lincolns are buried in the cemetery. The last was buried there in 1938.

Like her husband, Rebecca Lincoln, the president's great-grandmother, lived her remaining almost forty years on Linville Creek, died in 1806, and was buried beside her husband in the Lincoln Cemetery. Their log house burned before she died and was rebuilt some fifteen years after her death. The replacement structure was demolished by 1920.

Of particular interest is the fact that Lincoln slaves are buried

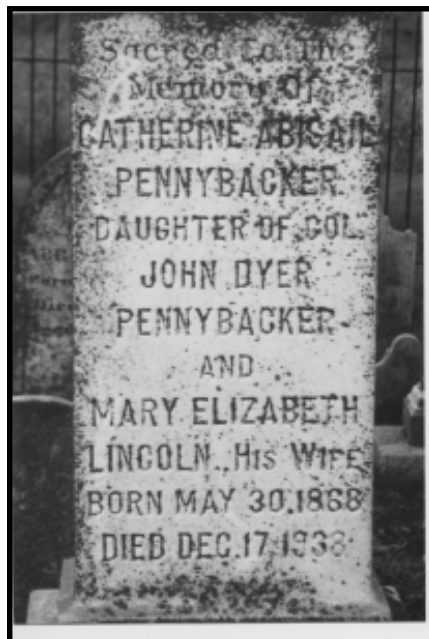


in the Lincoln Cemetery. Stones have been erected by the Lincoln family to honor Ned and Queen, the last of the Lincoln slaves. Theoretically, they were freed by the Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Abraham Lincoln.

President Lincoln was quite aware of his Virginia roots. In fact, while he was in Congress, in 1848, he wrote a letter to David Lincoln living on the Lincoln land in Rockingham County, acknowledging his connections with the Rockingham County Lincolns. He recited that his father had been born in Rockingham County, and his grandfather, for whom he was named, had lived there. He wanted to know more about his family.

Just as Lincoln knew of his Virginia connections, his Shenandoah Valley relatives were conscious of ties to the President during the Civil War. At one point a cousin was asked if Abe Lincoln was related to him; he replied, "Yes, I would like to meet Cousin Abe. I would like to shoot him." Obviously, family connections did not override the partisanship of war. In fact, Lincolns fought for the Confederacy.

Abraham Lincoln's great-grandparents, grandparents, and father all lived in Rockingham County; his grandmother was born in Rockingham County; and his family has been in the community for over 200 years. Virginia, then, has stronger claims as the ancestral home



Two more relatives of President Abraham Lincoln. (Photos by Daniel Métraux)



of the Lincolns than any other state. Because we Virginians are proud of our heritage, we are not reluctant to claim that Abraham Lincoln's greatness must surely arise in part from his Virginia heritage!

Almost thirty-five years ago, as a friend and I were having lunch, I lamented the fact that we did not do anything to honor the local Lincoln connections. We agreed that we should take some action. We decided that we would meet at the Lincoln Cemetery on Lincoln's birthday, February 12, and that we would each read something about Lincoln to each other. This began a series of thirty-four consecutive annual ceremonies in which I have presented a program at the Lincoln Cemetery. There has never been a good February 12! I have been there in forty inches of snow when only my dog accompanied me. While I am glad to say the dog seemed to enjoy the program immensely, I did cut it rather short. The weather is so predictably bad that I have started thinking of it as "Stonewall Jackson's revenge!"

On another occasion, Judge John Paul, my friend who helped me start the program, and I were the only two participants. It was a cold wintry day with blizzard-type conditions: the ground seemed to merge into the sky, all was white, the wind was howling, and the snow was blowing all around us. It was bitter cold. All of a sudden I saw emerging from the mist, and approaching us, a tall, dark figure wearing a stovepipe hat and what appeared to be a cape blowing behind him. I pulled Judge Paul's sleeve and said, "I hope you see someone coming." He agreed he did, and he said he was also relieved that I had seen it. Standing in a cemetery on a cold winter day with no visible landmarks, seeing an apparition of Abraham Lincoln is not an expected event! It turned out to be an actor who plays Lincoln in local schools, who happened to be in the area, heard about the ceremony, and "decided to surprise us."

Over the years, I developed a general intention to establish an organization that would both undergird the efforts to inform the community of the Lincoln connections and to identify and preserve local Lincoln landmarks. Because of very busy careers as a lawyer, then as a college president, I felt I needed to postpone the organizational activities until a later time.

The timetable was accelerated, however, after my experience in Richmond in April, 2003. At that time, a statue of Abraham Lincoln with his son, Tad, was placed at the Civil War Visitor Center at the Tredegar Iron Works facility where the Confederate Army forged its weapons. While the statue was benign and its placement was wel-



comed by much of the Richmond community, there were those who vented their bitterness about Lincoln's role in the Civil War by hooting, jeering, waving placards praising John Wilkes Booth, and generally condemning Lincoln as a tyrant and murderer. While I, a seventh-generation Virginian, also appreciate the Lost Cause tradition, I was shocked that more than one hundred years after the war there should be such passionate negative expressions about Lincoln and the results of the Civil War. I deeply admire Lee, Stuart, and other great Southern generals, but I am absolutely convinced that Lincoln saved the Union, abolished slavery, and made possible the restoration of peace and unity after a terrible war. What I saw in Richmond was not good-humored expressions of devotion to the South; it was mean-spirited, vitriolic, and abusive. I felt that this was a perverse twist to the Lost Cause tradition and needed to be countered. It is not appropriate for succeeding generations of young Virginians to be exposed to such foolishness without a response. Hence, the creation of the Lincoln Society of Virginia was expedited.

While the Society, which now has about ninety members, will continue to have as its objectives the preservation of local Lincoln landmarks and the communication of the Lincoln Family connections in Virginia, it will also have as its objective to provide an honest and fair interpretation of Abraham Lincoln from a Southern point of view. In that connection, the society holds an annual symposium at Bridgewater College, focusing on Lincoln and how Lincoln should be interpreted and understood from the point of view of Virginians and other Southerners. We are advocating an attitude of respect and admiration for Lincoln. Like the rest of the country – and the world – we Virginians admire Lincoln.

The story of Abraham Lincoln is well known. So is his image for good character. Shaped both by fact and myth, truth and fiction, Lincoln's reputation for honesty, wisdom, and fairness is indelibly engraved upon the consciousness of the American people. Revelations of misconduct and character flaws on the part of others who once held high office and treated as heroic have made us more skeptical about the authenticity of inherited images. Our skepticism has evolved into cynicism after being exposed immediately to revelations of scandals or moral errors by highly-visible leaders. The effect of these contemporaneous revelations is exacerbated by a 24/7 news format and a press almost completely free of any inhibitions, hero worship, or even moral per-



spective. Trivia and serious misconduct might get equal attention. Even now the excitement of electing the first African-American president, another Illinoisan, is tempered with the cynicism and partisanship that have become so much a part of our age.

When exposed to the cynicism of the current age and with the pressure of incredible scrutiny by historians and others over a period of more than 125 years, how does Lincoln's reputation hold up? While there are the contrarians and critics sprinkled among the host of commentators and scholars, it is almost universally believed by thoughtful observers that Lincoln truly was honest, reliable, trustworthy, wise, temperate, kind, fair, and visionary and that his presidency was critical to the preservation of our Republic. (Lerone Bennet is simply one of the more visible and recent to "expose" Lincoln as a racist; others have attacked his restrictions on civil liberties.)

In practically every survey of perceptions of American presidents, both historians and general audiences rate Lincoln in greatness either first or second only to George Washington. Such surveys, whatever their deficiency as accurate assessments, have produced the same results as to Lincoln for more than seventy-five years. Representative of the view of historians is that of James McPherson, dean of Civil War historians:

In every regard, Lincoln was a superior president. An extraordinary politician, he knew how to assess men's character and was a master of the details of party organization. Tolerant and forbearing, he possessed a genius for getting individuals of diverse viewpoints to work together on a broad range of issues. Manifesting an uncanny feel for public opinion, he displayed a sure sense of timing, always crucial in politics. Flexible in his approach, he possessed the ability to weigh alternatives and to perceive clearly the consequences of his actions. Never losing sight of his larger objectives, he knew when to stand firm and when to compromise. Not tied to the past, he was willing to try new policies to achieve his ends, and, always ready to shoulder responsibility, he was not afraid to change his mind or admit that he had been wrong. (McPherson, *We Cannot Escape History*, p. 79)

The assessment of Lincoln, however, is complicated by the dubious accuracy of much that has been written about him. Some of the early accolades showered on Lincoln clearly resulted from his martyrdom from an assassin's hand while Lincoln was still in office and because it happened at the successful conclusion of a great civil war. One should not be surprised at the martyrology that resulted; many



of us can remember rather heroic, almost mythical, post-death images of John F. Kennedy, also murdered while in office.

The heroic embellishment of Lincoln, which began immediately upon his death, complicates the work of historians in their efforts to assess his effectiveness and character. The embellishments were immediate and profound. Conveniently for the myth makers, Lincoln was murdered on Easter Friday, or Black Friday, so on Easter Sunday, the parallel to the death of the Christian Savior could not be resisted. Even formerly harsh critics joined in the nearly unanimous parade of hero worshipers. (In fact, some critics who expressed satisfaction at his death suffered beatings, jail sentences, or even death.) The lectures, articles, pamphlets, and books started immediately. As early as 1866, Josiah Holland published a complete biography, quite good in many respects, but highly idealized. He described Lincoln, who never joined a church, "as eminently a Christian President" and attributed all Lincoln's achievements "to the fact that he was a Christian President." (Holland p. 542) Other articles and biographies soon joined in to portray Lincoln in idealized, even mythical, proportions. What Merrill Peterson calls the apotheosis had begun.

Lincoln's longtime law partner, Bill Herndon, was appalled. Almost immediately after Lincoln's death, he started interviewing people who had known Lincoln, retrieved letters or other writings, and conducted research that he thought might help interpret Lincoln. He committed not only to produce a factually accurate biography,warts and all, but when he eventually published his book, he claimed to be interpreting the "subjective inner life of Lincoln" or the mind of Lincoln. While Herndon's biography was not published until 1889, his lectures on Lincoln starting in 1866 challenged and rejected any effort to make Lincoln into a Christian. He also soon planted his claim that Lincoln was a non-believer, even an atheist; he started the tradition that Lincoln did not love his wife, that his life with her was pure hell; he is responsible for the tradition that Lincoln loved Anne Rutledge and was overwhelmed to the point of being suicidal because of her death. It was Herndon who claimed that Lincoln admitted that his mother Nancy Hanks was illegitimate, and Herndon even claimed that Lincoln himself was illegitimate.

In 1872, after Herndon's controversial lectures, which provoked a hostile response throughout the country, but before his Lincoln biography was published, another Lincoln associate, his close friend, Ward



Lamon, bought a copy of Herndon's research notes and documents and published his own biography of Lincoln. Repeating some of Herndon's most controversial claims about Lincoln, it so enflamed the readers that a planned second volume had to be abandoned.

From those early days to this, the battle lines have been drawn. Some biographers and historians have been on one side of Herndon's interpretation, some on the other. As recently as 1998, Douglas Wilson, formerly director of Jefferson Studies at Monticello, in *Honor's Voice*, attempted to redeem the disparaged credibility of Herndon and his sources. For example, Wilson accepts as true the story of young Abraham Lincoln's passionate love for Anne Rutledge. Distinguished Lincoln scholar Mark Neely said about Wilson's acceptance:

From this meager factual record has been woven one of the most fantastic romantic tales in all of American folklore. Wilson, by contrast, believes Herndon correctly interpreted events from interviews that Wilson finds credible.

The tradition of Anne Rutledge, like so many others associated with Lincoln, is hard to establish as factually accurate. Because of the martyrology, the early embellishment of Lincoln's life and service, the antagonism of his biographers which resulted in condemnation of the other side's evidence or interpretations, the reader might despair not only of knowing who is right but whether anything that we have learned about Lincoln is reliable and complete.

It is a challenge, then, to try to draw conclusions about why Lincoln is perceived by scholars and amateurs alike to be such a great president, to know which characteristics or events we can accept as true in arguing our case. Clearly, some of the interpretations of Lincoln need to be rejected as not credible or as inconsistent with better evidence. For example, just in recent years, the "memoirs" of Mariah Vance, the Lincoln's Springfield, Illinois, housekeeper in the 1850s, have been transcribed and published. While they may very well be her actual testimony, her recollection almost fifty years after the events, published almost one hundred years after that, are simply not credible, not because Mariah Vance was not truthful, but because her memory, necessarily suspect after fifty years, was clearly affected by all the stories, legends, controversies, and claims about Lincoln to which she had been exposed during those years.

Even as to undocumented traditions and subjective interpreta-



tions of Lincoln, however, certain patterns emerge which seem to constitute reliable understandings of Lincoln. Merrill D. Peterson in his extraordinarily helpful book, *Lincoln: An American Memory* (1994), reviews all the important Lincoln literature and traditions and lays out five themes constituting the enduring image of Abraham Lincoln. They are:

- “ Savior of the Union
- “ Great Emancipator
- “ Man of the People
- “ First True American
- “ Self-Made Man

Professor Peterson masterfully marshals the evidence and patterns of interpretation to support each of those images of Lincoln as core, accurate, and enduring. To Peterson’s invaluable contribution to Lincoln scholarship there should probably be added two other major themes: Man of Character and author of federal rights. While Peterson, as is true of almost all Lincoln scholars, acknowledges the exceptional reputation of Abraham Lincoln for personal honesty and integrity, both during his lifetime and since, I submit that his character and wisdom are the primary reasons for his greatness and for his enduring position as one of our two greatest presidents. (The effectiveness of George Washington, the other of the two greatest presidents, also depended to a very great extent on the perception of his character.)

A claim that Lincoln was one of our greatest presidents implies some criteria such as success in war, popularity, economic prosperity, oratory, independence, and many other possible factors. My model or framework is admittedly existential. Rather than to adopt criteria from learned historians, biographers, and students of leadership or to develop criteria of my own, I take Lincoln as he really was – even with all the problems with the evidence I have already acknowledged – and look for the principles of greatness that seem critical to his success. To the extent that those principles are not unique to time, place, and circumstances, it seems reasonable to draw conclusions and inferences from the study of Lincoln that might be posited as general principles for greatness in presidents. In other words, to be great, a president should copy Lincoln. Clearly, the attribute of wisdom, ability to compromise, to understand the mood of the public, to develop consensus among disparate views, all contributed to his effectiveness. But his greatness came primarily from presidential character.



Before turning to the evidence which led me to name character as Lincoln's defining, essential quality, I will say what I mean by the term "presidential character." By presidential character, I include several characteristics critical not only to an understanding of the man but to an understanding of his greatness as president. I mean more than personal integrity although it is an essential component of presidential character. These are the four characteristics that constitute presidential character in Lincoln:

1. First, Lincoln had the ability to identify and articulate a vision, a statement of goals that were aspirational and noble and goals that lifted the human spirit.
2. Second, he understood and interpreted the events of his day in moral terms, not necessarily religious terms but certainly in moral terms.
3. Third, he was rigid as to core principles. On those, he would not yield.
4. Fourth, he had personal integrity and credibility. It was this personal integrity which made it possible for him to succeed.

I contend that character as I have defined it explains Lincoln's greatness and is essential for greatness of a leader in a democratic republic in which leadership is dependent on the popular will. Because I have already acknowledged that much of the evidence about Lincoln is either challenged or contradictory, I cannot simply cite uncontroverted circumstances of his life to make my case. I can, however, cite two major results that are not controverted even though people may draw different conclusions from them. They are preserving the Union and the emancipation of slaves. Then, I will describe some events whose successful outcome, I believe, were due to Lincoln's personal credibility.

Let me turn to the evidence on which I rely. These are actions or accomplishments where interpretations may differ but the historical facts are reasonably well established.

Saving the Union. Lincoln was so adamant about the preservation of the Union that he accepted war. His was not simply a concern about territory and property; as a Congressman, he had taken the unpopular position of opposing our war with Mexico to grab more territory. He had a vision of America as a self-governing republic which was wrapped up in the preservation of the Union. Lincoln not only saw a connection between the preservation of the Union and liberty, but he articulated a vision of the



Union as the embodiment of liberty and self-government. He said in 1861:

The central idea pervading this struggle is the necessity that is upon us of proving that popular government is not an absurdity.... If we fail, it will go far to prove the incapability of the people to govern themselves.

The distinguished political scientist, David Greenstone, wrote:

Lincoln, then, accepted but went beyond Webster's and Douglas's description of the Union. Lincoln's version did not simply refer to some existing regime with a specific set of republican institutions. It also included the Union's commitment to equality of rights, to the love of justice, and to the extension of positive liberty to all. Moreover, *Lincoln's loyalty was to this description.* (Greenstone, p. 236)

Lincoln saw the survival of the Union in moral and ethical terms. He saw the Union in almost transcendental terms, as an instrument for good. He thought its destruction risked this great experiment for good to be accomplished by good people. As Greenstone observed:

Consequently, for Lincoln the real danger was that the Union might no longer deserve to be so described – not because of a geographically divisive sectional quarrel but because of an assault on the Union's basic ethical principles. (Greenstone, p. 236)

And Greenstone adds: "Lincoln's concept of liberty and his description of the Union were ethical norms to be used in the facts he observed." (p. 240)

In his non-negotiable efforts to save the Union, Lincoln saw the Union as the vehicle for achieving the kind of nation the Founders had envisioned but had not fully established. For him the Union was this "last great hope," where government of the people, by the people, and for the people must prevail. His ability to articulate that vision, especially in the Gettysburg address is clearly established. He saw this struggle in moral terms. Even in the Second Inaugural Address, he acknowledged the will of Divine Providence and the justice that required enough blood to flow in war to requite the slave master's whip.

And, as to the Union, he was rigid. He never recognized the right of a state to withdraw from the Union. Even when he was told that he could end the war, even when many men in the North were willing to acknowledge secession, he was unmovable.



The Issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation. In late 1862, just after the battle of Antietam, Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation to be effective on January 1, 1863. Many, including important politicians and General McClellan, bitterly opposed it.

While the Emancipation was a war measure and did not liberate all slaves, its practical origins do not disguise its moral intent and dimensions. It had an enormous effect and met with extraordinary reactions, positive and negative. Jefferson Davis said it was the most execrable document in human history; many Democrats in the North condemned it and said they could no longer support the war; abolitionists loved it but thought it did not go far enough.

Lincoln's courage, sense of justice, and his ability to see the value of making the war a moral struggle prevailed. It was important that the troops and the citizenry trusted Abraham Lincoln and believed him when he talked about the importance of emancipating slaves.

Lincoln always hated slavery and while he conceded its constitutional and legal basis, he would not back off from condemning it and doggedly refusing to accept its extension. It is true that he made statements about the social inferiority about Blacks and discussed colonization of Blacks outside the country; however, he always saw slavery as immoral and said so. By the end of the war, he had brought the nation to his point of view.

As with the preservation of the Union, once Lincoln established the course of emancipation, he was tenacious in refusing to back down. Even when he was told in 1864 that the retreat from emancipation might end the war, he refused and made it a non-negotiable condition for ending the war.

In his successful fight to save the Union and in the emancipation of the slaves, Lincoln prevailed because of his character: his ability to envision and articulate noble ideals; his interpretation of events in moral terms, which gave the war the color of crusading for justice and liberty; and his tenacity in refusing to budge from his primary objectives. But Lincoln's success was also aided immeasurably by his own personal integrity and his credibility; he was seen as honest and just, almost an Old Testament tower of righteousness. People trusted him.

In some potentially disastrous circumstances, he prevailed to a great extent because he was perceived as a man of character even though he was unpopular. Just as his character helped him prevail in the struggle to save the Union and to emancipate the slaves, in other areas Lincoln's



credibility and character helped him succeed in extraordinarily difficult circumstances and contentious areas. These include the conscription of citizen-soldiers, reconstruction policies, and the re-election of 1864.

Conscription. When conscription was inaugurated, there was immediate opposition. Many thought it unconstitutional; probably most thought it was alien to democratic principles. The opposition was more than intellectual. It sometimes became violent. Just a few days after the successful battle of Gettysburg, there were violent demonstrations in several states. In New York City, one hundred people were killed and troops were needed to restore order. To have young farm boys from Iowa, Illinois, Ohio, and Irish and German immigrants to accept service in the military, it was critical they be able to trust the President. While troops came to love General McClellan and to respect and love some of their other commanders, the Union struggle came to be clearly identified with the persona of Abraham Lincoln, in sharp contrast to the lack of identification with Jefferson Davis in the South. Even though many people resisted the draft, sometimes violently, it was successful in supplying the necessary troops for the Union armies. Those men who complied and remained in the field trusted “Ole Abe” and were willing to die far from home because they believed in him.

Reconstruction. Remarkably, Lincoln really believed that there should be “malice toward none.” While he was determined to defeat what he saw as an insurrection and was committed not to let the plantation owners take control of the defeated South, notwithstanding the incredible loss of life and destruction of property, he did not yield his intellect to his emotions. Like a wise parent disciplining a child, he wanted the South fully restored with almost all its citizens participating. His ten percent policy was lenient. His exclusion of so few Confederates from the amnesty provisions made it easy to meet the 10 percent requirement for rebels who must take the oath of loyalty to qualify the state for readmission. Lincoln was consistent: just as the Southern states could not withdraw from the Union, they should not be excluded from it.

There were many in his party who disagreed, and after his death, they prevailed. For Lincoln, in contrast with the Radical Republicans, reconstruction represented more than a protection of presidential prerogative against Congressional usurpation; he believed fundamentally and fervently in the Union. Just as he had fought a war to preserve it, he would not permit the peace to destroy it by treating the South as mere conquered territory.



Abraham Lincoln's moral leadership, the ability of people to believe him and believe in him, also meant that the war did not become a war of revenge and punishment. While reconstruction had its hard aspects, Lincoln's moral leadership during the war and his actions during the closing days of the war set a tone which kept the war in perspective as one to preserve the Union, and eventually to free slaves, not to punish Southerners. Hence, the bloody retribution so often associated with civil wars in other countries did not occur in our own land.

Just six weeks before his death he said in his great Second Inaugural Address:

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan – to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.

Re-election of 1864. One would like to think that a man of Lincoln's eventual popularity would have had no trouble winning the election of 1864. After all, in the previous year, the North had been victorious at Vicksburg and Gettysburg. The South was thought to be on its last legs; the popular Ulysses Grant had been brought in from the West to take charge of the Union armies. But in the months preceding the November election, Lincoln was in grave danger of not being re-elected.

He was unpopular with many groups. The abolitionists rejected him because he was too cautious on the slavery issue; the War Democrats and the Copperheads hated him because he made freedom of the slaves a condition of peace; the Radical Republicans in Congress were angry that he appeared to be soft on the South as far as reconstruction; others were angry because of the prolongation and lack of success in the war.

War fatigue was overwhelming. People wondered if the war would ever end. After Grant took over the Eastern armies, just from May to August, he churned out 100,000 casualties and always came out second best to Lee. There had already been 500,000 deaths; eventually the total would reach 600,000.

Lincoln had upset many because of his executive decisions. He had suspended the writ of habeas corpus and permitted military courts to put opponents in jail. He had applied heavy-handed tactics to keep Maryland and other border states in the Union.



The Emancipation Proclamation was a big problem. Issued in September 1862 to become effective January 1, 1863, it infuriated the War Democrats who had supported the war but passionately opposed making the war a contest over slavery. Their slogan had been: "The Constitution as it is; the Union as it was." Now some added: "And the Negroes where they are!" The election, in many respects, was a referendum on slavery.

Lincoln's political position in the summer of 1864 was tenuous. The Democrats nominated General George McClellan who had previously commanded the Union armies. He was extremely popular, particularly with his troops who would be voting in this election.

The Union victories at Atlanta on September 2, 1864, and Sheridan's heroic rally at Cedar Creek in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia on September 30, 1864, clearly helped turn public opinion to Lincoln, and he won re-election decisively. He was also helped by the Copperheads or Peace Democrats with the Democrats in the election. However, several aspects of the election show the effect of Lincoln's character on the results:

" Despite General McClellan's popularity with the troops and the general population, Lincoln decisively defeated him.

" Even though the Union troops knew that McClellan's victory might end the war so they could go home, by a vote of eighty percent they supported Lincoln, knowing it would keep them in the killing fields for more war. They clearly trusted Lincoln; they believed in him.

" In dramatic fashion, Lincoln was able to turn the Union around on slavery. His clear stand that the war must be fought until slavery was destroyed, so unpopular when he first asserted it, carried the day. After his re-election, there was never again any question of slavery continuing. But as late as August 1864, just ten weeks before the election, Lincoln was in great political trouble. Would his persona, his character, his reputation for integrity carry the Union cause in the face of the horror of hundreds of thousands of casualties, extraordinary economic and social displacement, and general weariness of war? To a friend in August 1864, he said: "You think I don't know I am going to be beaten, but I do and unless some great change takes place badly beaten." On August 23, he signed this memorandum: "This morning, as for some days past, it seems exceedingly probable that this Administration will not be re-elected. Then it will be my duty to so cooperate with the President-Elect, as to save the union between the election and the inauguration;



as he will have secured his election on such ground that he cannot possibly save it afterwards." Because Lincoln was such a man of character and integrity and believed so fervently in Constitutional government he would not take extraordinary measures to cancel or postpone the election, even during a civil war, to maintain his position although he recognized that if he were defeated, the cause for which had fought so hard would be forfeited. As a matter of conscience, he would not abandon the noble cause; he would not diminish the nobility of the effort.

While it might have helped him win an election to have appeared more flexible in negotiating a peace agreement with the South in 1864, particularly showing a flexibility toward the emancipation of slaves, he issued this statement in a "To Whom It May Concern" letter just before the election: "Any proposition which embraces the restoration of peace, the integrity of the whole Union and *the abandonment of slavery*...will be received and considered." (Emphasis added.) His critics howled; they thought he was continuing to require Union blood to be shed over a stubborn insistence that slaves must be free.

David Long, in *The Jewel of Liberty* (1997), wrote: "The re-election of Abraham Lincoln provided the glue that sealed the cracks in the foundation of representative government. It was a necessary rite of passage for a nation struggling to live up to its stated ideals while it tossed in a sea of violence." (p. xix)

I contend, then, that the words of Lincoln, the most eloquent of any president, the consistency of his positions on matters of principle, his view of the struggles in moral terms, and his personal integrity explain his greatness as a president. While some characteristics of Lincoln are disputed, others are beyond dispute. His reputation for honesty which earned him the sobriquet "Honest Abe," is well known and unchallenged. As early as his young adult years in New Salem as a storekeeper, going to great lengths to return change erroneously withheld or a book borrowed or to correct an misstatement, through his practice as an attorney when he refused to handle unjust causes and was perceived to be so honest that one could take his word for anything, and into the White House, one could believe Abraham Lincoln. His lack of pretense, his wonderful prose in letters and speeches, his kindness (he could hardly bear to authorize deserters to be shot) and his fundamental fairness (as seen in his refusal to withdraw the Emancipation Proclamation) confirmed his persona of justice and integrity, and helped make him a Man of the People, and for most in the Union, but clearly not all, a sympathetic fig-



ure. His kindness and empathy were reflected in letters to widows and mothers of soldiers killed in combat; he frequently visited military hospitals where he could not control his tears, once stooping to kiss the forehead of a dying soldier; he complained that he who could not kill a chicken because of abhorrence of blood should preside over so much killing. Turning from one young soldier in a military hospital whose leg had just been amputated, he exclaimed: "Oh, this awful, awful war!" Pressed by one on his generals to authorize execution of a soldier deserting to get home to see his mother, he said: "General, there are already too many weeping widows in the United States. For God's sake, don't ask me to add to the number for I won't do it." His soldiers came to understand that he cared deeply about them; they personalized the relationship and thought of him as "Uncle Abraham."

Lincoln's special qualities as president also included an extraordinarily high degree of personal honor and integrity. While he was seen as a man of tenderness, sympathy, kindness, and fairness, all of which endeared him to his soldiers and to most of the Union population, those characteristics would not have been enough to permit him to prevail through four years of bloody warfare and for his name to continue to be so hallowed even in a cynical age. The additional, critical, ingredient was his personal honesty and integrity. Merrill Peterson has written: "Many marveled at the entire absence in him of vanity and affectation, malice and guile. He was open, candid, and honest. 'Honest Abe' was more than a political slogan; it was God's truth." (Peterson, p. 33) One could believe Abraham Lincoln. When he said something, he meant it, and one could rely on it. On matters of honor and principle, he not only spoke clearly and firmly; he could not be budged from his position even in the face of overwhelming opposition and the prospect of almost certain defeat. At many points during the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln's personality and character were critical to his ability to prevail in the face of overwhelming odds.

Ultimately, it was Lincoln's character, particularly his reputation for honesty, that made the American people trust him. His personal integrity permitted him to educate and persuade the troops and the citizenry to the moral aspects of the struggle to achieve his twin objectives: maintain the Union and liberate slaves. Ida Tarbell, one of Lincoln's biographers, noted that after his death: "They [the people] saw how slowly, but surely, he had educated them to feel the vital importance of these objects [emancipation and preserving the



Union], had resolved their partisan warfare into a moral struggle. The wisdom of his words, the sincerity of his acts, and the steadfastness of his life were clear to them at last. With this realization came a feeling that he was more than a man."

Tarbell goes on to say that while mythology has elevated Lincoln's image to prophet and martyr, that goes too far. She noted:

He is the simple, steady, resolute, unselfish man whose supreme ambition was to find out the truth of the questions which confronted him in life, and whose satisfaction was in following the truth he discovered. His lofty moral courage in the Civil War was the logical result of lifelong fidelity to his own conscience. From his boyhood he would keep faith with that which his mind told him was true though he lost friend and place by it.

It is this man who never rested until he had found what he believed to be right, and, who having found it, could never be turned from it, who is the Real Lincoln.

In the final analysis, it was Lincoln's character which made the Union soldiers and the American citizens believe in him; it was his character which caused his message of justice and reconciliation to prevail after the War; it was his character which has endeared him to succeeding generations of Americans. Even in this era of cynicism in which nostalgia, idealism, and the eternal American optimism are in jeopardy, we can hold on tightly to an authentic belief that Abraham Lincoln was truly one of that rare breed, an authentic American hero, a man of character.

The implication of my premise is clear: if presidential character is the essential factor that explains Lincoln's qualities, then we must have it in presidents who will be great. Some can be able, good administrators, good politicians, even popular. They may make good decisions, deliver good speeches. But in the times of crisis and during our greatest national challenges, it is presidential character like Lincoln's that will be required so that this "last great experiment" of a moral people governing themselves with liberty and justice for all shall not perish from the earth.

So, for a Virginian with ancestors extending back seven or more generations, descendant of Confederate soldiers, why does Lincoln matter? For the same reasons he matters to the nation, to the world and to history:

- He saved the Union – not alone, but he provided invaluable, visionary, courageous, and tenacious leadership;



- He emancipated the slaves – not as a traditional abolitionist but as a pragmatic disciple of fairness and justice;
- He restored the idealism to the American experience in self-government by effecting a greater reality to the Declaration of Independence;
- He advanced the positions that the federal government could take responsibility for the rights of citizens – through emancipation, the Civil Rights Amendments in progress at his death, and his willingness to assert federal supremacy;
- He provided a model for the presidency rivaled only by Washington – one based on pragmatic idealism, the wise use of power, rigid adherence to core principles, a total lack of egotism and revenge and his incredible personal integrity.
- He was the image of America at its best and his example is one that should motivate our leaders – and us – today.

The Lincoln Homestead

After very friendly conversations with representatives of the Shank family, current owners of the Lincoln Homestead, the Lincoln Society of Virginia has been able to obtain an option to purchase the Lincoln Homestead and a parcel of about ten acres surrounding it, including the Lincoln Cemetery for \$452,000. The option gives the society an opportunity to raise the purchase price in order to preserve the historic property and, eventually, to convert the Lincoln Homestead to a museum. While the society



board has not yet developed a plan for raising the money, there will be attempts to obtain grants and solicitations among our membership and within the broader community around Harrisonburg. For any Lincoln Society member who wishes to contribute toward the purchase of the residence, tax-free gifts may be sent to: The Lincoln Society of Virginia, ATTN:

Elaine C. Dellinger, 402 East College Street, Bridgewater, VA 22812.

Immediate steps will be to complete a survey of the parcel and to get an evaluation of the house from a contractor to determine its condition. The board hopes to eventually have a Lincoln family museum in the Lincoln Homestead. If any member knows of Lincoln documents, photographs or other memorabilia associated with the Lincolns, gifts of such items would be very much appreciated.



Notes on Trips to Virginia

by Herbert A. Kellar
(discovered and transcribed by Robert Kyle)

Any researcher concentrating on the Shenandoah Valley in the nineteenth century quickly learns that documents from that era are widely scattered. Two extensive collections outside Virginia are held by the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison, and the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin. How did this happen?

Cyrus McCormick initially undertook to manufacture his reaper at his farm on the Augusta-Rockbridge line. He then contracted with manufacturers in other places to produce the machine according to his specifications, but was disappointed with the quality. By the late 1840s, he had moved to Chicago, taking with him his two brothers, Leander and William, and had established his own factory. William died in 1865, but Leander remained with the firm, eventually becoming the superintendent of the factory. The two surviving brothers took different approaches to the company's strategy: Leander favored limiting production to meet existing demand, while Cyrus demanded vastly increased production to satisfy the potential world market. This conflict culminated in 1880, when the board of directors agreed to Cyrus' motion to remove Leander from his position as superintendent.¹

*In addition to differences on corporate strategy, Leander had become increasingly jealous of the homage given Cyrus as the inventor of the reaper. Before Cyrus's death in 1884, Leander was insinuating that their father Robert was the true inventor, and that Cyrus had usurped the credit. Leander made a number of trips to Virginia seeking evidence to support his assertion. He also had the support of his two sisters. Anticipating that Leander would soon make his claim public, William J. Hanna, an adherent of the Cyrus faction, spent from May to September in 1885 in Virginia collecting documents and soliciting testimony to contravene Leander's allegations. In the fall of 1885, Leander published **The Memorial of Robert McCormick**. Thereafter, both factions continued to accumulate evidence.²*



The Cyrus McCormick family established the McCormick Historical Association to collect and preserve its evidence. In 1915, the family hired Herbert A. Kellar to head the association. He made repeated trips to Virginia, and during his tenure the collection increased from ten thousand to over a million items. In 1934, he described one of his many expeditions, this one in April, 1926. His account is extracted below.

*Kellar's companions were Ulrich B. Phillips and James Rion McKissick. Phillips was an historian at the University of Michigan and later at Yale. His **Life and Labor in the Old South** (1929) was considered a landmark work at the time, particularly for the use of plantation documents, although his defense of the plantation economy and slavery was subsequently strongly criticized by later historians. McKissick, a journalist, became the dean of the School of Journalism at the University of South Carolina, and eventually that university's president.*

Notes on Trips to Virginia
Herbert A. Kellar
McCormick Historical Association
Chicago, 1934

During the winter of 1926, Phillips, who was then engaged in visiting various manuscript depositories in the South in search of material for "Life and Labor in the Old South", wrote to me and suggested that he would like to make his sojourn in Virginia, where he expected to arrive in the spring, coincide with one of my manuscript expeditions. Knowing that he keenly desired to obtain new and original materials for his book and as the opportunity coincided with a trip I was planning, we made arrangements to meet in Lexington in April.

When I arrived and went to the Dutch Inn where we were to meet, I found that Phillips had not yet come. A little later as I was walking up the street I saw Ulrich's tall, lanky figure coming down a little hill toward me, accompanied by a man with a short, stocky figure even more rotund than my own. Phillips introduced his companion as James Rion McKissick, and I thereupon heard a curious tale. It seems that several days previously Phillips had been in Greenville, South Carolina. While there a reception had been given for him by a local patron of the Arts. At this reception Phillips met James Rion McKissick, a brother of the host. James McKissick had



Herbert Kellar (r.) with George A. Rainey, an International Harvester executive, during the filming in 1929 of "Romance of the Reaper" at Walnut Grove, the McCormick farm. (Courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society, WHi-58663.)

recently sold a Greenville newspaper of which he had been both the Publisher and Editor, and had determined to devote the remainder of his life to the collection of historical materials relating to South Carolina. Alas for resolutions – he is now married and the Dean of the School of Journalism at the University of South Carolina. James was much interested in Ulrich and his activities, and in the course of conversation inquired whither he was bound. Phillips told him that he was going to Lexington to meet me, and explained the nature of our plans McKissick, without further preliminary, inquired if he could join us. Phillips was surprised, but as he rather liked McKissick, said that he had no objection, provided I had none, and added that he thought McKissick was safe in taking the chance. So James Rion McKissick was duly presented for an approval which I was prompt to give and have never since regretted.

We adjourned to the Dutch Inn and began to discuss ways and means. I shortly formed a further favorable opinion of McKissick



(additional to my first judgment), this time based on his practical talents as a pioneer in a strange land. Almost immediately McKissick asked if I had any whiskey, observing that he thought we ought to celebrate our joint meeting. The idea appeared reasonable, but inasmuch as I had only been in Lexington an hour and it would be necessary to hunt up a bootlegger for a supply, I begged for delay until the next day. Shortly after that McKissick excused himself and departed. In about three quarters of an hour he returned and produced two quarts of very good whiskey. Ulrich and I were surprised and asked him where he got it. He replied that while we were talking he suddenly remembered that an old friend of his was teaching at the Virginia Military Institute. Thereupon he looked up the gentleman and found him in his room. To McKissick's question "Have you any whiskey?" the Major replied: "Yes – two quarts; I've just had a call from my bootlegger." The two quarts were then displayed and McKissick promptly confiscated them, saying "I have need of these; you can order another supply from your bootlegger." Thereupon he brought the whiskey to us.

This was an auspicious beginning for our proposed adventures, but privately I was considerably concerned about the actual procedure for the next day. Phillips in a casual manner had told McKissick that I could produce old and hitherto unknown manuscripts in much the same fashion as a magician might bring rabbits out of a hat – and I rather wanted to make good. From experience I realized that while I had a dozen good leads on hand, there was no guarantee that the first or even the twelfth would turn up anything worthwhile. However I finally decided that we would try first for the Armentrout papers.

Accordingly, the next morning we took a bus to Greenville, located in Augusta County, about twenty-four miles from Lexington, where we hired a car and set out toward the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains. George W. Armentrout, the gentleman we were seeking, was a farmer-antiquarian with whom I had occasional contacts several years previous. Each time I had met him he had urged me to visit him and look through his collections, an invitation which up to this time I had been unable to accept. Almost immediately we ran into difficulty as I only vaguely knew his exact address in the county. Furthermore there proved to be several Armentrouts in that vicinity. Finally we located one who seemed to be a member of the particular



family we sought. We went to his home. A very old lady opened the door and upon my request to see George Armentrout seemed somewhat taken aback. Finally she told me that he had been dead for three years. This was an unexpected blow but after a brief conversation in which we learned that the lady was his sister, she invited us to come in and meet another aged brother, one Jacob Armentrout. Jacob, with the hospitality of the region, kindly consented to show us his own treasures, which upon inspection proved not to be very precious. In the course of our visit we learned that George's former residence was three or four miles away and that a tenant was now taking care of his farm. Pressing for information about George's papers, I discovered the possibility that some of them might still be at the farm, and eventually the sister consented to take us to the place. Because the roads were rough, and our own car none too reliable, we accepted an invitation to ride in her Ford.

After Ulrich, McKissick, George's sister, and myself had gotten into the car, together with a boy to drive, we had a rather full load, but we did not care for adventure lay ahead. The ride was not all it might have been for the wind was cold and raw and we were half frozen before we reached our destination. Ulrich with his long arms vainly attempted to hold down the curtains of the car to keep out the cold wind. Eventually descending into a deep valley, we stopped at the edge of a bawling creek, where the Ford disgorged its passengers, and we made preparations to cross a rickety foot bridge of the suspension type – the house was set back a few yards from the bank on the other side. The bridge did not look particularly trustworthy, but McKissick bravely volunteered to try it first. Our apprehensions proved correct for McKissick almost fell into the water, but finally to the accompaniment of much free advice, he crossed safely and profiting by his example we quickly followed.

At the house George's sister knocked on the door and the wife of the tenant appeared. In answer to a request for George's papers, the woman nodded an assent and presently reappeared dragging a large and disreputable looking gunny sack. Like feasters at a banquet we eagerly gathered around the sack and opened it. At once we perceived that it was full of old letters and papers. Digging down into the mass, I pulled out a letter and looking at it found that it was dated 1732. I asked the woman if there were any more bags, and eventually she brought out four other sacks similar to the first. By this time



Phillips and McKissick, not to mention myself, were becoming quite excited. Tying the sacks on the fenders and on the top of the car, and presenting a most bizarre appearance to anyone who might happen to meet us on the road, we started back to the Jacob Armentrout house. On the way Phillips whispered to me: "I think we ought to get this material if we can". I replied in the affirmative, and suggested we make an offer. Phillips then wanted to know what I thought would be proper, and I said, "Well, suppose we offer \$5.00 a sack, sight unseen". To our surprise and gratification, George's sister accepted the proposition and we promptly paid over the twenty-five dollars.

At the Armentrout house we transferred the treasure to our own car and as quickly as we decently could, made our departure, fearing all the while that the sister might change her mind about letting us have the material. As it turned out our fears were quite unfounded, because she was delighted to be able to obtain the amount stipulated in order to clear up some matters in connection with her brother's estate, of which she was the administratrix.

Reaching Greenville we found that the train, which ran to Lexington once a day, was due shortly, and accordingly decided to travel by that means since it would make it easier to carry our newly acquired possessions. At the station we bought tickets and turned over the sacks to the agent, asking him to express them with us to Lexington. A few moments later the agent came up to me with a puzzled expression on his face and regretfully imparted the information that he could not accept the bags for shipment. Upon asking the reason, he said that he had looked all through his express schedules and could find no designation which covered the content, which he had been told were old papers. I then told him that if he could not accept our papers, we would take them with us in the coach. The agent kindly, but firmly, said that this could not be done. In this impasse the agent suddenly had a brilliant idea, and asked if we objected to his shipping them as "corn shucks". So corn shucks they were and Phillips gravely paid out thirty cents to ship five sacks of corn shucks from Greenville to Lexington.

Upon our arrival at our destination we hired a taxi and proceeded to the Dutch Inn. The guests in that somewhat sedate establishment were greatly astonished to see two colored boys, bending and staggering under the weight of five huge gunny sacks, proceed-



ing through the front door, solemnly followed by three scholars, disheveled in appearance, but with the light of victory glowing in their eyes. An ominous pause ensued, but Mrs. Louise Owen, the proprietress, who is used to my vagaries, gallantly rose to the occasion and rented us a room for the gunny sacks.

Thereupon for two days and two nights with the aid of the major portion of the two quarts of whiskey and the enthusiasm of the quest for the unknown, Phillips, McKissick and myself proceeded to examine the twenty-five thousand or more documents in the gunny sacks. Befitting our enterprise and belief in cooperation, the arrangement that we made was practical and efficient. Taking a bag at a time, each of us selected a goodly portion for inspection. After due industry each had two piles, one of large proportion which was chaff, and one of smaller size which was wheat. In the course of our endeavor Phillips found about two thousand slavery items; I found several thousand iron furnace papers and McKissick, curiously enough, a few South Carolina items. When Phillips and McKissick finished, I still had three documents to go through. One turned out to be worthless. The second turned out to be an iron furnace item. The third, the last of the twenty-five thousand to be examined, nearly gave me apoplexy. I read it through one and then passed it to Ulrich with the remark "Do my eyes deceive me?" Ulrich took one look at what I had handed to him and let out a whoop of joy in which he was soon joined by McKissick. The document was a contract in the handwriting of Daniel Boone and signed by him, in which he accepted several hundred pounds from a Mr. Johnson of Augusta County in return for which Boone proposed to locate a large tract of land for Johnson on his next trip to Kentucky. We voted that the occasion was dramatic and called for the finishing of the second bottle, which we did. Checking later, we discovered that the document was properly authentic. This was the propitious beginning of a three weeks' trip in Virginia with Phillips and McKissick which I will not soon forget. ...

Just three weeks to a day after I had met Phillips and McKissick in Lexington, we parted company, Phillips going to Washington; McKissick to Greenville and I to Lynchburg. ... Just a week after I left Phillips and McKissick – in an old mill in Nelson County, I found thirty thousand old letters and documents of the Massie family which subsequently Phillips and I acquired. It was a deep regret to me at the time that Phillips and McKissick were not with me when I made this discovery. ...



Epilogue

The Armentrout papers shipped as corn shucks were not maintained as a separate collection, and are impossible to trace today. But in March, 1927, the University of Texas purchased the bulk of the William Massie Papers from Ulrich Phillips, and photostatic copies of other documents from Kellar, using funds from the George Washington Littlefield fund for Southern History. These are now available on microfilm as the Records of Ante-Bellum Southern Plantations, Series G.

On other trips to Virginia, Kellar acquired documents relating to the life and times of the McCormick family, including Cyrus's efforts to market a plow, the iron industry, especially Cotopaxi, McCormick's unsuccessful iron furnace, and the nearby Vesuvius furnace, and the Tye River and Blue Ridge Turnpike, of which Robert McCormick was a director. Phillips made other forays, too, and his papers, now in the Yale University Library, include other Virginiana.

In 1949, the land and buildings of the McCormick Historical Association were sold in an estate settlement, and the McCormick family charged Kellar with finding a permanent home for the collection. He approached over thirty institutions, including the Virginia Historical Society, but in 1951 he recommended the Wisconsin Historical Society, which was affiliated with the University of Wisconsin, his alma mater. The university had a world class history department and agricultural school, and its Midwest location was close to the McCormick family and to the headquarters of the International Harvester Company, the successor to Cyrus's company. Both the family and the company have augmented the collection in the years since.

Endnotes

¹See David A. Hounshell, *From the American System to Mass Production*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press (1985) 153-182.

²See William T. Hutchinson, *Cyrus Hall McCormick*, Vol. I, New York: Century (1930) 99-125.



"In the Attic" Gilpin Willson Jr.

by Beth Huffer

Beth Huffer worked with ACHS as an intern. This paper represents her impressions of the importance of local archives collections. Ms. Huffer is a student at New York University where she is obtaining a master's degree in museum studies.

History involves hunting. Sifting through old boxes in an attic is a gamble of sorts. The odds of finding the missing page to the Constitution are slim, while it is more likely that you will discover dusty magazines and old electric bills of no grand historical significance. These magazines and bills, however, may not have an interesting story to tell and yet they are critical in reconstructing the lives of loved ones, ordinary people just like ourselves, who once lived and breathed.

The archives of the Augusta County Historical Society act much like the county's attic. Here boxes filled with bills, correspondence, photographs, and other personal items are donated, and the society is given the task of cataloguing and preserving the county's past for future generations. Staff and volunteers process the vast amounts of materials and try to make sense of the remains that represent a lifetime of accomplishment.

An example of one such attic box contains the papers of Gilpin Willson, Jr. Donated by relatives, it weaves together, through water bills, electric bills, and business correspondence, a man's life that was both interesting and extraordinary. The trail leads to a bigger picture of a community pillar who was known as a charitable banker, business genius, and society benefactor of many causes.

The mundane papers of Gilpin Willson Jr. reveal that he was the son of Gilpin Willson Sr., a druggist who began his career in Staunton in 1892. Born in Maryland in 1868, Willson Sr. attended the University of Maryland where he studied pharmacy and eventually became a doctor of pharmacy at George Washington University.



Gilpin Willson, Sr. at the prescription work area of Willson Bros. Druggist 15 W. Beverley Street. Taken on Oct. 4, 1957. (Photo courtesy of Tom Hamrick)

When Willson Sr. and his brother Percy came to Staunton, they opened the Willson Brothers Drugstore. This became the family business until the death of Willson Sr. in 1962 at the age of ninety-five. An example of Willson Sr.'s outspoken, and often stubborn personality is recounted by his niece, Betty Maddox, in a family story involving a moose head mounted on the wall in the Willson Brothers Drugstore: "One day the health inspector came and said to Gilpin (Sr.) that he had to take the head down as it was too near the soda fountain. Gilpin, who had shot the animal up in Canada, said that he would not take it down and bid the inspector good day and told him to get out of his store." The moose head remained in place.

Gilpin Willson Jr. proved to be just as determined to succeed as his father. Papers in the box indicate that he helped to run the Thomas Hogshead and Fishburne & Son drugstores. Although not a druggist like his father, Willson Jr. nonetheless was a shrewd businessman. He took careful inventories of the stores and wrote letters luring a well-trained druggist to leave his present employment and work at his store.



Crestar Bank, (National Valley) 18 West Beverley Street, circa 1960-70. Main lobby. (Photo courtesy of Tom Hamrick.)

Willson Jr.'s chosen career was banking. He managed the National Valley Bank, became its president in 1945, and continued this post until his death in 1967. Staunton resident Tom Hamrick remembers Willson Jr. as a generous banker, a good judge of character, and a decent man. When a client could not make his loan payments, he often paid them himself.

This generosity continually shows up in his personal papers through donation cards to the YMCA and even a note from a woman thanking Willson Jr. for helping her find a '51 pen for her husband. Even more revealing is a statement in the box concerning a neighbor's son, Fred C. Potter and his draft notice for World War II. Willson Jr. pleaded that Potter was his frail mother's sole support and responsible for the upkeep of her property. He describes Potter's character as outstanding and used his influential status to keep Potter at home.

As with most Staunton residents today, Willson Jr. had several roles to play during his lifetime. He was husband to Isabel, father to two children, a member of the Staunton School Board, and involved in other causes. In the box of his personal papers, one finds copies of the 1943 Stanford Achievement Test as well as an angry letter from a



Willson Bros. Drug Store, 11 West Beverley Street, circa 1918-20, John Weaver on left, Scheele Kelley on right. (Photo courtesy of Tom Hamrick.)

mother protesting the types of classes in which her children were placed. Remarkably, there is a letter from the Office of Defense requesting that Willson Jr. become the Local Transportation Administrator during World War II.

Thus, this survey of Willson Jr.'s personal file is but a small glimpse, portrayed through mundane records and letters, of an extraordinary man with various talents. At the beginning of this investigation, the name of Gilpin Willson Jr. seemed unfamiliar and unusual in Augusta County. At the end of the research, however, Gilpin Willson became a friend of the people of Staunton as they recounted the friendly service at his drugstores, his years at the bank, and his generous acts around town. He touched many lives of those who knew him and is still talked about when people discuss how Staunton used to be.

His story and more abound in the boxes and archives of the Augusta County Historical Society. Come join the hunt.



The Barbour Democratic Convention in Staunton in June of 1832

by Daniel A. Métraux

*Dr. Daniel A. Métraux is an Augusta County Historical Society board member, the Associate Editor of the **Augusta Bulletin**, and a professor of Asian studies at Mary Baldwin College.*

National political conventions were a new phenomenon in the United States in 1832. The Democratic Party held its convention in Baltimore in May 1832 where delegates dutifully nominated President Andrew Jackson for a second term as President and former Secretary of State Martin Van Buren (1782-1862) as Vice President. The previous December, the National Republican Party, also meeting in Baltimore, nominated Senator Henry Clay as its candidate for President. A southern faction of the Democratic Party, however, while supportive of Jackson, despaired at his selection of Van Buren, and launched an alternative ticket featuring Jackson and Philip P. Barbour of Virginia as Vice-President. The southern faction held what became known as the Barbour Convention in Staunton, Virginia, between 12-14 June 1832.

The open split in the Democratic Party was not enough to defeat Jackson, who handily defeated Clay in the November election, but what happened in Staunton did serve as a harbinger of the national crisis that was to engulf the nation in the Civil War less than three decades later. The Barbour convention was a direct result of the "Nullification Crisis" of 1828-1832 that merged issues of states rights with disagreements over tariffs. Businessmen and planters in the South bitterly opposed high tariffs imposed by the federal government on manufactured goods made in Europe. Southern planters advocated free trade with Europe while manufacturers from northern American states wanted the tariffs to protect them from European trade.



The issue became a major crisis after the 1828 election when Jackson's Vice-President, John C. Calhoun (1782-1850) supported the claim of his native South Carolina that it had the right to declare void ("nullify") the tariff legislation of 1828 and that his or any state had the inherent right to nullify any federal laws or statutes that went against its interests. Jackson, while sympathetic with the South in the tariff debate, was adamant in his advocacy of a strong union and strongly denounced any talk of nullification. When advocates of nullification began talking about possible secession and began military drills in Charleston, South Carolina, to defend the state from a federal attack, Jackson prepared for a military confrontation to assert federal authority. Calhoun rapidly became a staunch opponent of Jackson and went as far as to resign as vice-president in 1832 to serve again as a senator from South Carolina.

South Carolina eventually passed a bill of nullification defying the authority of the federal government and had begun military preparations to resist any attempt by Jackson to suppress their goals. President Andrew Jackson, sitting in the White House, sponsored a bill of force giving him authority to raise forces to put down the potential South Carolina rebellion. In Richmond, Virginia Governor Floyd said that if Jackson used force to suppress South Carolina, "I will oppose him with a military force. I nor my country will be enslaved without a struggle." Other Southern states were prepared to join Virginia in defense of their region. Civil War was certainly a possibility. Ultimately Jackson's show of force and a compromise bill sponsored by Senator Henry Clay on tariffs ended the crisis.

However, when Jackson let it be known that he wanted Martin Van Buren to serve as his Vice-President, many southern Democrats, were horrified that a northerner and avowed critic of Calhoun might become Jackson's anointed successor. Many southerners had initially supported Jackson hoping to build a national political coalition through the Democrats to oppose the ambitions of northern and national politicians such as John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay.

The movement against Van Buren was especially strong in Virginia. Historian William J. Cooper in his 1978 book, *The South and the Politics of Slavery, 1828-1856*, writes:

To Southerners, who saw the Jackson party as a vehicle for southern power, handing its future leadership to a northerner seemed to undermine the rationale behind the party. The most doctrinaire and



sectionally conscious felt the greatest danger and expressed the fiercest outrage. Although anti-Van Buren sentiment surfaced across the South, Virginians took the lead in trying to stop his advance. Virginians still thought of their commonwealth almost as a nation within a nation; the chief political end was to reestablish Virginia's supremacy by nominating a Virginian to head the party and government. The Jackson party was an essential prerequisite, for the first step required the destruction of the national doctrine of John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay. To attain that goal they accepted Andrew Jackson and wanted to build a party that would elevate the general to the nation's highest office. Then, however, they expected a Virginian to become the champion of the new Jeffersonian party. To men of this bent Van Buren's new status as heir apparent seemed to signal Virginia's permanent decline.¹

Anti-Van Buren Virginians presented one of their state's leading politicians, Philip J. Barbour, as their candidate for Vice-President at the Democratic convention. Barbour (1783-1841)² was a distinguished Virginia lawyer, judge, and politician and one of several Barbours who rose to prominence in Virginia—his brother James Barbour served as governor of Virginia and U.S. Secretary of War. Philip Barbour served in the Virginia House of Delegates from 1812-1814 and then as a Congressman (1812-1824; 1827-1830) and Speaker of the House (1821-1823). He was a circuit court judge for eastern Virginia in the early 1830s and an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court from 1836 until his death in 1841. A strong supporter of Jackson, he declined Jackson's offer of U.S. Attorney General and also turned down a chance to become a senator from Virginia.

Calhoun's stand against the tariff and in favor of nullification had endeared him to many Virginia politicians including Governor Floyd who wanted to both promote and protect Virginia's sovereignty against federal encroachment. They decided to promote the candidacy of Barbour for Vice-President on a Jackson ticket to eliminate Calhoun's major enemy, Van Buren, and to promote Virginia's national interests by having a prominent Virginian serve as the party's heir apparent. It is unclear whether Barbour supported their efforts or not, but there is no evidence that he tried to stop a draft movement in his favor at the May 1832 convention.

Despite the efforts of these Virginians and several other southern delegates to promote the candidacy of Barbour, Jackson made it known that Van Buren was his choice as running mate. When it came time to vote, twenty-three of Virginia's delegates voted for Barbour



along with twenty-six other southern votes, but Van Buren easily won by accumulating 280 votes. The Jackson ticket was set to square off against the National Republicans led by Henry Clay.

The pro-Barbour forces, however, were not ready to give up. They decided to assert their strength and strengthen their powerbase by fielding their own Jackson-Barbour ticket on the ballots of as many southern states as they could. The first step was to hold their own political convention that would be held in Virginia because Virginians were leading the pro-Barbour effort and because their man was himself a distinguished Virginian. They chose Staunton as the site of their convention held in mid-June of 1832. The clearly anticipated result was the nomination of Jackson for President and Barbour for Vice-President.

Why Staunton?

An interesting question is, 'Why choose Staunton?' Governor Floyd was in Richmond and other key supporters came from other parts of the state. Barbour may have had some supporters in Staunton and Augusta County, but few if any were leaders of the pro-Barbour movement. The answer must have to do with geography. Staunton was then located at the very center of the state and was, as is the case today, at an important junction of east-west and north-south roads. If one wanted to hold a convention that would attract political leaders from across the state and elsewhere in the South, Staunton was a convenient place to do it.

Staunton was then a hub of political activity with strong partisans for both Jackson and Clay. According to nineteenth century regional historian Joseph A. Waddell:

Early in 1832 politics were very lively in Augusta. The followers of Henry Clay took steps to bring him forward as a candidate for the presidency. Among the active Clay men in the county were Judge Stuart and his sons, General Porterfield, Samuel Clarke, General Baldwin, the Kinneys, Waddells, Bells, Eskridges, Crawford, McCues, Guys, Pattersons, Cochrans, Sowers, Michie, Harnsberger, and others. The supporters of General Jackson, though less numerous, were equally active. Among them were some who afterwards became Whigs, such as Mr. Peyton, W.W. Donaghe, Colonel Robertson, and Captain Sterrett. But some of those who proved life-long adherents to the Democratic Party were then on hand in behalf of Old Hickory. A few of them were Michael Garber, John Randolph, William A. Abney, L.L. Stevenson, Lewis Harman, James Points, the Bayers, and the Heiskells. Dr. Speece was a Jackson man, as far as he meddled



in politics, and some of the other party sought to weaken his influence by attributing his partiality to the fact that Jackson was a Presbyterian. The Jackson men held a meeting February 8, 1832, and passed resolutions denouncing Clay and Calhoun for voting in the Senate to reject the nomination of Van Buren as a minister to England "as a most disgraceful attempt to overthrow a patriotic rival."³

Waddell notes that although Jackson traveled through the Valley to and from Washington, D.C., to his home in Nashville, he always made a point of avoiding Staunton because of his many political enemies there.⁴ Jackson made a special detour of Staunton when going home in July 1832 because National Republicans had chosen the city as the site of their state convention where they drew up a party platform opposing Jackson and selected presidential electors for Clay for the 1832 national election.⁵

Election Results

Eventually the Jackson-Barbour ticket found its way onto the ballot in five southern states: Virginia, North Carolina, Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi. While Jackson headed this ticket, an alternative ticket with Jackson-Van Buren was also on the ballot in all these states. In effect, Jackson was running against himself as well as Clay in these states since voters could choose between two Jackson tickets. There was some fear among strong Jackson supporters that voters would split their pro-Jackson votes thus letting Clay win the electoral votes in one or more of these states. Barbour was widely criticized for dividing the Democratic vote. Clay supporters claimed that with two separate Jackson tickets in the field, they would win Virginia. Democrats responded by placing more pressure on Barbour to withdraw. He responded by issuing a well-crafted letter in which he withdrew from the race in Virginia only. Although his letter was not intended to suspend activities on his behalf in other states, his slates elsewhere also ceased to agitate on his behalf.

Jackson supporters need not have worried because Jackson-Van Buren won all five of these southern states quite handily. Virginia voters certainly got the message, because in the end the Barbour line only got 244 votes in the state, but did much better elsewhere getting a third of the vote in Georgia, twenty-seven percent in Mississippi, fourteen percent in Alabama, and 3,855 of 29,000 votes in North Carolina. Needless to say, Barbour's ultimate support for Jackson paid



Endnotes

off, because the President returned the favor by nominating the judge to the United States Supreme Court in 1836.⁶

In some respects one may say that the 1828-32 Nullification Crisis and the creation of the Jackson-Barbour ticket represented an early step toward what would eventually erupt as a national crisis and civil war. And it is fascinating to learn about Staunton's role in this process.

¹William J. Cooper, Jr., *The South and the Politics of Slavery* (Baton Rouge La: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 16-17.

²Congressional History biography of Philip Pendleton Barbour: Brother of James Barbour and cousin of John Strode Barbour. A Representative from Virginia; born at "Frascati," near Gordonsville, Orange County, Va., May 25, 1783; attended common and private schools; was graduated from the college of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va., in 1799; studied law; was admitted to the bar in 1800 and commenced practice in Bardstown, Ky.; returned to Virginia in 1801 and practiced law in Gordonsville, Orange County; member of the State house of delegates 1812-1814; elected as a Republican to the Thirteenth Congress to fill the vacancy caused by the death of John Dawson; reelected as a Republican to the Fourteenth through the Seventeenth Congresses, reelected as a Crawford Republican to the Eighteenth Congress and served from September 19, 1814, to March 3, 1825; Speaker of the House of Representatives (Seventeenth Congress); was not a candidate for renomination in 1824; offered the professorship of law in the University of Virginia in 1825, but declined; appointed a judge of the general court of Virginia and served for two years, resigning in 1827; elected as a Jacksonian to the Twentieth and Twenty-first Congresses and served from March 4, 1827, until his resignation on October 15, 1830; chairman, Committee on the Judiciary (Twentieth Congress); president of the Virginia constitutional convention in 1829; appointed by President Jackson, June 1, 1830, judge of the United States Circuit Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, declining the chancellorship and the post of attorney general; refused nominations for judge of the court of appeals, for Governor, and for United States Senator; appointed Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court and served from March 15, 1836, until his death in Washington, D.C., February 25, 1841; interment in Congressional Cemetery. <http://www.infoplease.com/biography/us/congress/barbour-philip-pendleton.htm> (accessed 29 May 2009).

³J. A. Waddell, *Waddell's Annals of Augusta County from 1726 to 1871*, 415. Available on line at <http://www.roanetnhistory.org/bookread.php?loc=WaddellsAnnals&pgid=427> (accessed 5/1/09)

⁴Waddell writes (p. 416): "General Jackson was depicted by his contemporaries who were hostile to him as passionate, rude and illiterate. He was no doubt a man of quick and violent temper, but his manners were habitually gentlemanly and refined. He certainly possessed the art of winning friends. On his trips between the Hermitage and Washington city, he sometimes passed, in his private carriage drawn by four gray horses, through the eastern part of Rockingham county, and would make it convenient to spend a night at the house of Mr. Tobias McGahey, one of his personal and political admirers. Arriving there one evening, the family was in some trouble, and he went on to Mr. Jere Harnsberger's to obtain shelter for the night. He was hospitably entertained, although Mr. Harnsberger had been up to that time an earnest anti-Jackson man. The result of this casual visit was, that ever after the host and all his sons and retainers were zealous partisans of Old Hickory."

⁵Waddell writes: General Jackson, then President, lodged at Waynesborough Friday night, July 27th, on his way to Tennessee. As usual, he avoided Staunton. His custom was to arrange his trips so as to spend a Sunday at Lexington. He always attended church, and was particular to sit in the pew of James McDowell, afterward the governor.

⁶Cooper, 20-21.



Augusta County Ironmaking

by Chris Furr

Chris Furr is a blacksmith at Colonial Williamsburg and a native of Augusta County. This paper is an outgrowth of a presentation he made about ironmaking in Virginia at an Early American Industries Association conference.

Iron production had a very early start in Virginia. Iron was produced, in small amounts, at Jamestown by the fall of 1607. By 1619, a full size blast furnace was under construction at Falling Creek, near Richmond. Iron was one of the first profitable items to be produced by the Virginia Colony. The Jamestown Colony, settled and administered by the Virginia Company, sought to find ample profits in the natural resources of the New World.

It took some time for the iron industry to make it way west over the Blue Ridge Mountains and into the Valley of Virginia. The colonists “pushed ... between the two great walls of mountains and having found beds of... ore about them started an iron industry parallel with that in lower Virginia.”¹ The first Valley furnace was constructed for Isaac Zane in 1760. Known as Zane’s Furnace or Marlboro Works, this site processed iron ore into pig iron, or cast iron. The site was located on Cedar Creek, in Frederick County. This business was followed closely by John Miller’s Mossy Creek Iron Works in Augusta County. Five years later a forge that processed pig iron into wrought iron and then into iron bars was added to the Mossy Creek works.

Many locations in Augusta County had “all the requisite elements at hand: ore deposits, or banks of ore (brown and red hematite); limestone necessary as a flux to burn off impurities in the iron; trees for charcoal (a furnace in blast [could] use up to an acre of trees a day made [into] this fuel.); granite and clay [was used] for construction; flowing water [provided the] bellows power; navigable rivers [harnessed] to bring raw materials to the iron works as well as to ship products to market. Also needed were farmland, pasture for horses and oxen and a nearby grist mill.”² These iron works were very large, somewhat self-contained, isolated communities. They employed a large number of workers and their families. These communities were sometimes referred to as “iron plantations.”



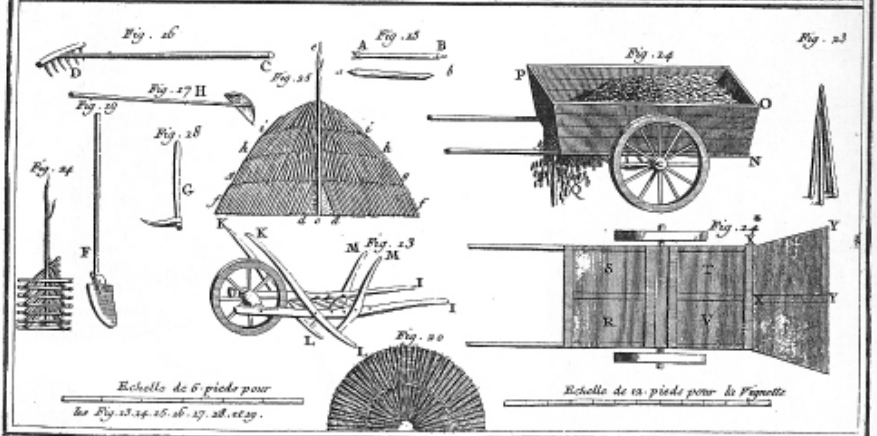
Fuel for the furnaces was one primary motivator for the chosen location.

In the mid-1800s there were five furnaces that operated in the area. Seven hundred and fifty acres of land was clear-cut to provide charcoal for a furnace. Twenty-five to thirty years would pass before that area could be coaled again. Between 19,000 and 23,000 acres of forest had been clear-cut in continuous bands. These operations [created] impressive impacts on the forest of the Shenandoah Valley [that] may still be seen today as the mountains were criss-crossed with roads, dotted with colliers pits, and covered with iron ore test pits and scarred by mining operations.³

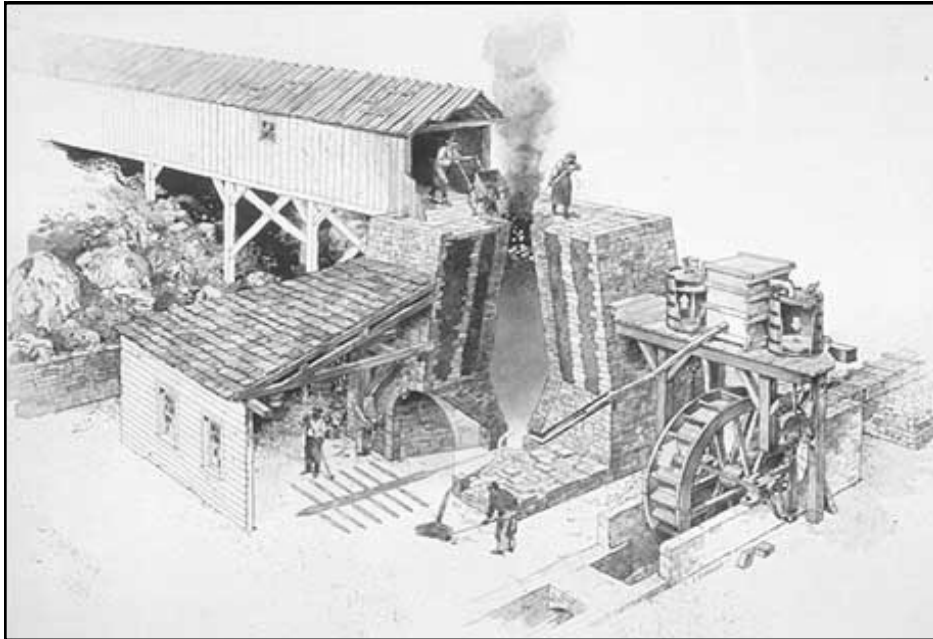
The men who cut the timber, and the colliers, who converted it into charcoal, were an impressive lot. Fifteen woodchoppers, mostly slaves, were the normal size work gang for a furnace. "Ironmaster[s] counted on each hireling for approximately 400 cords of wood" annually.⁴ These "woodchoppers would generally put in some 44 or 45 weeks a year; with there task set at 9 cords a week, [which] translated into 400 cords."⁵ These fifteen men would cut about 6,000 cords of wood a season. "If that much wood were stacked end to end in standard cord configuration (eight feet long, four feet wide, and four feet high) it would create a pile [that] would stretch for over nine miles." In December of 1775, Isaac Zane, owner of the Marlboro Iron Works, advertised in the *Virginia Gazette* for "a sufficient number of hands to cut 5,000 cords of wood."⁶ All of this wood would be converted to charcoal to fuel his furnace.

Colliers were in charge of making charcoal. Four-foot lengths of wood "were closely piled. . . in heaps with a small opening in the top (and down through the center) for ventilation, covered with twigs, leaves, and earth, and ignited in the center of the heap. After almost a day had elapsed they closed the top and the wood smoldered for three or four days. The heap slowly settled, and when the smoke stopped coming out of the pile the charcoal was made, the [charred] wood was left for four or five days to cool. Finally workers raked off the covering and carted the charcoal."⁷ This product would then be sent to the furnace.

Cold blast iron furnaces, while not all exactly alike, were common in construction and operation. John S. Salmon described a typical furnace: "A foundation of about twenty-eight feet square for the furnace. The workers worried the granite blocks into place, and



The making of charcoal in 1760. From Duhamel du Monceau, "Art du Charbonnier," Descriptions des Arts et Métiers.

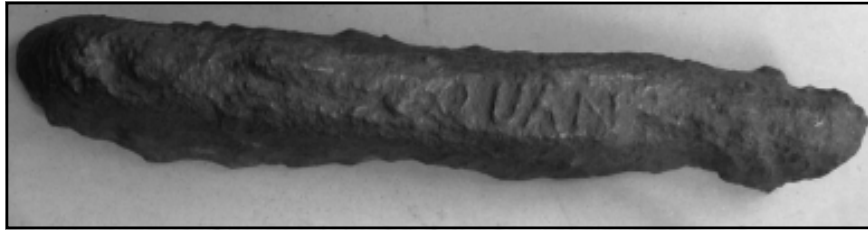


A cross section of an iron blast furnace

slowly the furnace rose, tapering to a height of approximately thirty feet. A wooden bridge led from the top of the furnace to a low hill behind it, and between the furnace and the hill were the wheel pit and its water wheel for powering the bellows.”⁸

Water was brought to the wheel by means of a wooden trough. “The construction of the interior or the bosh of the furnace was crucial to its efficient operation. This central cavity, lined with brick, widened like a flask from a diameter of about three feet at the top of the furnace to about ten feet near its base. Then at the bottom of the furnace, the bosh narrowed to two feet in diameter to form the crucible, into which the molten iron settled.”⁹ The iron was the heaviest material in the ore. As it melted it would sink to the bottom of the crucible. Anything else floated on the top and was taken off as slag. “There a clay plug filled the tap hole through which the molten iron could flow out to the casting floor.”¹⁰

Salmon further described the process: “On the side of the furnace, a large recessed stone arch permitted access to the tap hole and also a damn stone, removed when necessary to clean out the crucible. In front of the arch was the sand filled casting floor, in which there were channels and side grooves so the iron could flow from the tap hole. The long channels were called sows and the side grooves



Pig iron

pigs. The sand bed was also used for casting large flat pieces of iron ware such as stove plates and firebacks.”¹¹ Once the process of making the iron started, it did not stop until the lining of the furnace deteriorated, the water power dried up or froze, or the charcoal or the ore supply was exhausted.

There was a market in Augusta County, Virginia and the colonies, for pig iron, bar iron, and some cast iron products. These commodities were produced by the furnaces before the Revolutionary War. This was, however, a small market. Most iron works produced pig iron for export to England; with its much larger population, lower labor cost, and highly specialized manufactories, England was the ultimate market for colonial pig and bar iron. By the time of the Revolution, the colonies were estimated to be the third largest producer of iron in the western world, following just behind Russia and Sweden.

Thomas Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia* written in 1781 listed five furnaces operating within Virginia at the start of the Revolutionary war including Miller’s works on Mossy Creek in Augusta County. Miller’s works was reported to produce about 150 tons of bar iron and 600 tons of pig iron each year. This furnace was involved in production work for both the new state of Virginia and the new nation; military items, such as cannon balls and shot, may have been included in this production. Bar iron was made and used in the production of small arms in arsenals such as Hunters Works, Rappahannock, and Point of Fork. Mossy Creek bar was also used in the war production of axes, shovels, and hardware. Without the iron industry the former colonies would have found it difficult to gain their independence from England.

After the Revolutionary War many more ironmasters moved into Augusta County; “furnaces and forges sprang up in the brown hematite regions of the... valley of Virginia, where Indians and traders were fleeing before the farmer and his contraptions.”¹² New iron furnaces and works included: Mount Torry and Union Forge.



*Stoveplate from Mossy
Creek Iron Furnace in
northern Augusta County*

Our new country could not have accepted an economy based on so many imports. Tariffs were placed and American manufactures competed with English made goods as never before. Iron was no exception; ironwares were the least expensive metal products available. Many everyday items were made from both cast and wrought iron. An advertisement from a Virginia furnace late in the eighteenth century announced: "Notice is here by given that the said furnace entered into blast the first of the present month, and is expected will continue until Christmas next: Where may be had, by whole sale or retail, the following assortment of casting to wit, pots, kettles, camp kettles, ovens, skillets, flatirons, spice mortars, fire dogs, smith anvils, forge anvils, forge hammers, wagon boxes, stoves or any other kinds of castings that may be wanted."¹³ Also advertised were such



items as sash weights, wafer irons, salt pans, and weights for clocks and scales.

Pig iron, made into wrought iron at finery forges, had many more uses. This type of work was done at forges where they used water powered trip hammers. This bar was fashioned by smiths into hundreds (if not thousands) of other useful items including andirons and fireplace tools. Cooking equipment was also quite popular: spatulas, forks, spoons, spits, and gridirons were manufactured. Other important commodities included tools for agriculture and trades. Hardware was needed, while firearms were a necessity. There was even a nail factory, at Friel's (William Friel) in Augusta County "supposed to be the oldest in the country."¹⁴ During the early nineteenth century the number of furnaces and forges grew in response to a demand for their products. Some of this development may have been a precipitant of the needs of the state factory and foundry at Richmond, It most likely added to domestic demand. By the 1840s there



Elizabeth Iron Furnace



were even more furnaces in the county, including Canada, Cotopaxi, Estiline, and Elizabeth furnaces.

By the mid-nineteenth century, iron production in the county, and in the Shenandoah Valley as a whole, had begun to decline. These furnaces faced increased competition from the more industrial North. Northern states had better transportation and ready alternatives for fuel. The massive consumption of wood, for charcoal in Virginia furnaces had either limited the production of some iron works or shut others down altogether. In the North many of the blast furnaces converted to alternative fuels (coke made from coal, or anthracite coal) because they also had already depleted traditional charcoal fuel. Advantageously, the rail transportation system in the northern states was much more complex than in the south; many of the furnaces there had their own branch lines.

As early as 1837, railroads were constructed in Virginia but did not reach Augusta County until the eve of the Civil War. Most iron made in the Valley had to be hauled overland by wagon although in the Upper Valley where Augusta is located, a lot of iron went on the James River and Kanawha Canal.

The Civil War did help to reverse this decline. Ironworks that were still in blast saw a marked increase in demand. Many furnaces that had been abandoned were brought back on line, some by the state government. One unexpected benefit of the hiatus of certain furnaces was that the timber, needed for fuel for many of these furnaces, had had an opportunity to grow back during the decline.

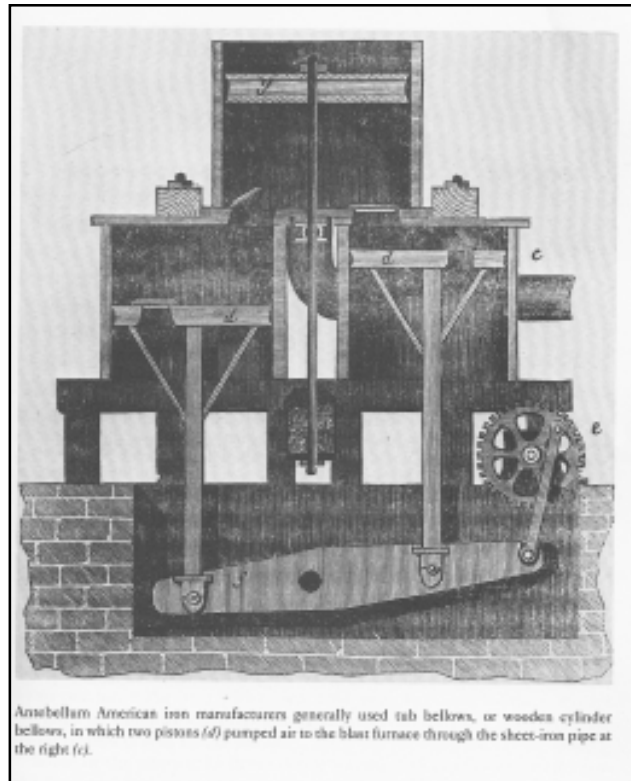
Richmond's Tredegar Iron Works was one of the largest, most important ordinance plants in the South. It consumed huge amounts of pig iron; eighty-five percent of the output of Virginia's best furnaces. "Soon after the war began Tredegar was using iron at a rate of 15,000 tons a year; this demand created a serious problem. Virginia production of pig iron for 1860 was only 9,096 tons," noted one historian.¹⁵ To solve this shortfall, the Tredegar Ironmaster Joseph Anderson, in the fall of 1860, wrote the owners of all the idle furnaces in the entire state. Although he was appealing to their patriotism when he requested that they reopen, he also opined that this provided the astute business owner with the opportunity of a lifetime. His plea worked; all but one went back into production.¹⁶ A number of these furnaces were in Augusta County. Some of the iron produced was shipped to Richmond by rail; most were shipped over-



The remains of Mount Torry Furnace near Sherando in Augusta County.

land to the James River and down to Richmond. During the war twenty-three ironworks were in operation in the Shenandoah Valley. Many of these works were disrupted, at one time or another by military actions. Furnaces were military targets and many were burned, put out of blast, or were shut down. However, most were able to get back into production at levels equaling or exceeding production before being targeted.

Northern commanders would have had information on the location of most of the furnaces in Virginia including those in Augusta County. In 1864 J. Leander Bishop published *A History of American Manufactures*. Under the southern states he made the following comment: “. . . as several hundred thousand men, well armed have tried for three years to visit Richmond and have not succeeded, our reader will excuse us from attempting a personal visit and be content with the information, meager as it is, furnished in census returns.”¹⁷ Another author, J. P. Lesley, had collected complete information on Virginia furnaces between 1856 and 1859. This information was published as *The Iron Manufactures Guide*, but not until 1866.¹⁸ Federal authorities, however, had access to Lesley’s information during the war and Union maps located seventeen of the most important furnaces.¹⁹



Amesbury American iron manufacturers generally used tub bellows, or wooden cylinder bellows, in which two pistons (d) pumped air to the blast furnace through the sheet-iron pipe at the right (c).

A tub bellows was added to the Mount Torrey furnace in the late 1850s.

Augusta County furnaces played an important role in the effort to supply Virginia and the Confederacy with the iron it needed to wage war. At the end of the Civil War, many of these same iron works would play a part in the reconstruction of Virginia's war-torn economy. Virginia continued that increased production past the Reconstruction period. Even in 1880 the state produced more iron annual than it had in the decade before the war.²⁰

A better understanding of life at one of these blast furnaces can be had by taking an in-depth look at one operation. Anyone who has either grown up or has lived in the Waynesboro area for a period of time is most likely familiar with Sherando Lake and the George Washington National Forest. A number of furnace sites are within these forests. Mount Torrey furnace is hard to miss; its remains are almost on top of the road as one goes into or out of the Sherando Lake Recreation Area area. The furnace began around 1804 as a cold blast charcoal furnace tucked below a gorge in the Blue Ridge Mountains.²¹



A typical late nineteenth-century ironmaking community in the Shenandoah Valley.

Pig iron from this furnace was transported on wagons on the Howardsville and Rockfish Gap Turnpike to the James River and floated down to Richmond.”²²

The Mount Torry furnace is a stone trapezoid with an outside stone structure about thirty feet wide and forty feet tall. The tap arch had metal supports and was fifteen feet wide and about twenty-five feet in height.²³ The furnace was converted to a hot blast in 1853 and a tub bellows was added. These alteration increased production. Mount Torry was able to produce in half a year in 1854, 700 tons of pig iron, but by the spring of 1855 the furnace was out of blast.

Mount Torry’s owners were contacted by Anderson at the start of the Civil War. They were asked to reopen the furnace to help supply the state’s increased demand, and this they did. In 1864 General Anderson of Tredegar bought Mount Torry. Anderson wanted to be able to send all of the furnace production to Richmond. He needed a minimum of seventy-five men to operate the project—mostly slaves. Finding labor that late in the war, whether free or slave, was sometimes a difficult task. When he attempted to hire “a white man, who might be employed to oversee the operation without creating a vacuum in the army, it shows the startling scarcity of men. Having fruitlessly searched Virginia for a charcoal maker over the military age of fifty years, he appealed apologetically to the Secretary of War for a soldier, who, though wounded in the body, could greatly aid the operation as a collier.”²⁴



On June 10, 1864, Mount Torry was attacked by a force under the command of General Duffie, as the Union Army worked its way southward from the fallen city of Staunton toward Lexington. In her book *Virginia Iron Manufacture in the Slave Era* published in 1930, Kathleen Bruce described the raid in the flowery fashion of that time period:

(The) men women and children were working, idling, cursing or blessing life according to there usual wont with never a thought that tomorrow would differ materially from today. At Mount Torry when whippoorwills were making the wooded mountainside ring with their lonely note; when the scarred ugliness of the furnace and it surroundings in the mountain hollow were hidden by the deep shade of a summer night, there came the sound of the trampling of hundreds of horses. Until they appeared no one could tell to which army they belonged. In either case confusion must have reigned. Women and children roused by the noise huddled in the surrounding cabins. Probably the 'slaves' greeted the appearance in the red light of the furnace the unmistakable blue uniforms, in this chance of escape with 'the Yankees', they saw instantly their entrance into the florid promised land of their. . .vivid fancy. General Duffie, commanding the raid, gave the order to burn the furnace [and stores]. Then quickly arose the aroma of smoking corn and bacon. The night changed into unearthly day, disclosing the naked ugliness of the furnace and it's environments and the pale faces of the manager and his handful of men- some of them ex soldiers- now powerless before the armed host, yet doomed to watch the destruction of precious machinery, and the wanton burning of food and forage too bulky to be carried off by the swift moving cavalry. Having no doubt strongly picketed the settlement, the general and the rest of his 2,000 men camped in the gorge above the furnace, probably out of sight of the smoldering mass. Before 8:00 am the next day they were gone, taking with them 'slaves' -such as wanted to go- horses, mules and cattle, and leaving desolation, a death like quiet, and possibly for a few days a future without hope.²⁵

Mount Torry was rebuilt by 1865 and was in operation until 1884. Unfortunately time and the elements are slowly destroying this historic furnace.

A 1987 United States Department of Agriculture publication noted this about the state's iron making industry:

In [summary] the charcoal iron furnaces constituted part of Virginia's economic history from its initial colonization. . .to the end of the 19th century. This industry was characterized by marked individualization, continual economic uncertainty, a transient labor force, fluctuating markets, and a dependency on a sometimes-capricious natural resource. Ownership of an ironworks never guaranteed success, but rather depended on the abilities of the iron master and the worker.²⁶



Many of the blast furnaces in Augusta County and the Shenandoah Valley survive today, a few are easy to find; many are tucked away as deteriorating ruins and one must do a fair amount of searching to discover them. Other evidence of these iron works can still be found in the foundations of buildings such as slave quarters, in abandoned charcoal piles, now looking like heaps of black soil, the remnants of old roads crossing the mountains, ore pits, and slag heaps. This rich industrial history of the Valley, unknown today but to a few people, is worth further research.

List of furnaces and ironworks located in Augusta County:

Augusta Furnace, Buffalo Gap Furnaces, Canada Furnace, Cotopaxi Furnace, Elizabeth Furnace, Estaline Furnace, Kennedy's Furnace, Mossy Creek Furnace and Forge, Mount Torry Furnace, Mount Vernon, Union Forge

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⁵*Ibid.*, 150.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷John S. Salmon, *Washington Ironworks of Franklin County, Virginia 1773-1850* (Virginia State Library, Richmond 1986), 115.

⁸Salmon, "Ironworks on the Frontier," 190.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰*Ibid.*

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¹²Bruce, "Virginia Iron Manufacture in The Slave Era," 130.

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¹⁵John D. Capron "Virginia Iron Furnaces of the Confederacy" in *Virginia Cavalcade*, Autumn 1967, 13.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰*Ibid.*, 18.

²¹Bruce, "Virginia Iron Manufacture in the Slave Era," 415.

²²Janet Friedman, "The Iron Industry in Virginia, 1620-1920" (*National Register of Historic Places*, 1992), 11.

²³USDA, "The Historic Iron & Charcoaling Industries in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley," 1.

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The Twilight of the Valley Campaign: The Battle of Waynesboro

by N. Douglas Payne Jr.

Douglas Payne is a graduate of Fishburne Military School ('84) and Hampden-Sydney College. He lives in Richmond with his wife, Ashby, and his son, Turner. He has a keen interest in Virginia history and currently serves as Secretary of the Sons of the Revolution in the Commonwealth of Virginia. As an introduction to this article, he writes: "As a lifelong student of history, I am fascinated by the stories of our ancestors' lives that sometimes resulted in fortune or disaster, especially in times of crisis. Ultimately, their fates shaped the lives of future generations in ways great and small. With this in mind, I recently discovered a story about a famous American cavalryman who altered the lives of a handful of my ancestors and their comrades who fought in Augusta County during one of the final battles of the Civil War."

I remember very well what a harsh Waynesboro winter feels like. As a cadet in the barracks of Fishburne Military School, perched atop a hill in the center of town, I can still feel the cold wind howling down Afton Mountain and blowing through the school's breezeway during January and February, a period we used to call the Fishburne "Dark Ages." Wearing cadet gray most winter days with the rest of the corps, I would often shiver as I walked briskly down the open-air "A" Company stoop on my way to class. Little did I know at the time that a great-great-great grandfather had endured a much harsher Augusta County winter 119 years before I arrived in Waynesboro. Unlike our Spartan but relatively warm quarters in the barracks, he and his comrades had little more than ragged tents and a few meager rations to sustain them in late February 1865. I am sure he would have preferred to have worn my gray woolen uniform; however, he would have been lucky to have owned a pair of mended trousers, sack coat, and shoes during that bitter winter.

February 1865 found Union Gen. George Armstrong Custer's



cavalry harassing the last remnants of Confederate Lt. Gen. Jubal A. Early's Second Corps, chasing them east from the village of Fishersville, Virginia, toward nearby Waynesboro. In the course of a year, the Confederate defenders of the Shenandoah Valley had dwindled to just over 800 ill-fed, ill-equipped, half-frozen men who were exhausted after months of continuous battle.¹

Gen. Robert E. Lee sent Lt. Gen. Jubal Early into the Valley early in 1864 as commander of the Second Corps with the hope that Early would sweep the Valley of Union forces and dilute the strength of General Ulysses S. Grant who was threatening the Confederate capital of Richmond at Petersburg. By the summer of 1864, Early had shown considerable daring and promise, first by scattering Union forces in the Valley, then by riding north to invade Maryland and disrupt the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. Successful in these endeavors, Early next turned his attention toward the Federal capital of Washington.² On July 11 and 12, 1864, President Abraham Lincoln rode out to the western edge of the city and watched with considerable angst as Early's cavalry attacked the outskirts of the District of Columbia while his infantry attacked Fort Stevens on the city's northwest perimeter. While the Confederate cavalry punched holes in Union pickets, Union Gen. Horatio Wright sent reinforcements that eventually repelled Early, forcing him to retreat. Reluctantly withdrawing, Early remarked to his staff, "Major, we haven't taken Washington, but we scared Abe Lincoln like hell!"³ In fact, Early became the only military commander in American history to get close enough to threaten a sitting U.S. president.

Early's Corps contained the 51st Virginia Infantry Regiment, a venerable southwestern Virginia fighting force originally mustered in Wytheville in the early days of the war. First commanded by Gen. John B. Floyd, the 51st counted among its ranks Richard R. Rakes, my great-great-great grandfather. A six-foot tall, dark-haired farmer from Poplar Camp Creek in Patrick County, Virginia, Rakes enlisted and served in Company "D," Col. Gabriel C. Wharton's brigade, along with three of his brothers: 2nd Cpl. Christopher Columbus Rakes, Pvt. Alexander Rakes, and Pvt. Samuel Jackson Rakes, Jr. Also serving in Co. D was a cousin, Pvt. Charles Jackson Rakes. Another cousin, Pvt. Thomas Tennyson Rakes, served in Company H.⁴ In all, six members of the Rakes family served in the 51st and were a tight-knit bunch.

The 51st regiment was comprised mostly of southwestern Virginia farmers who identified best with "Old Jube" Early than with



previous commanders like Gen. Floyd. The men considered Early one of their own. Early was from nearby Franklin County and had graduated from West Point, class of 1837. He fought in the Mexican War before returning to the Franklin County seat at Rocky Mount to pursue a quiet life as a lawyer-farmer. Although anti-secessionist on the eve of the war, Early changed his mind once hostilities broke out in 1861. He accepted a rank of Major General in the Virginia Militia and eventually rose to the rank of Lt. General under Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, taking command of the Second Corps.⁵ While still in his commander's good graces, Lee affectionately referred to Early as his "Bad Old Man" for his stubborn demeanor and short temper.⁶

The men of the 51st fought their first major battle at Fort Donelson in Tennessee on February 12 through 16, 1862. Federal forces were determined to open up the Cumberland River as a pathway for invasion of the South in the western theater, and they eventually captured the fort, forcing the Confederates into retreat.⁷ The Union victory marked the rise of General Grant from obscure officer to major general, and the battle cost the 51st some of the worst casualties they would suffer the entire war. Among those killed was Richard's brother-in-law, Pvt. David T. Hall, also of Company D.⁸ The regiment then assisted in the defenses of Chattanooga and Nashville and became engaged in several battles and skirmishes in the Kanawha Valley. Back in their native Virginia, the 51st fought at the battles of Lynchburg, Third Winchester, and with the brave Corps of Cadets of VMI at the battle of New Market on May 15, 1864.⁹

By the fall of 1864, the 51st Virginia, along with the rest of the Second Corps, found themselves facing Union General Philip Sheridan at the battle of Cedar Creek, Virginia. Despite Early's brilliant rout of two-thirds of the Union army shortly after the battle commenced, Sheridan rallied his men and eventually defeated the Confederate troops on October 19, 1864.¹⁰ In all, the 51st Va. Infantry had participated in seventy-five battles and skirmishes and had marched more than 1,800 miles in just over a year, including rescuing a trapped cavalry regiment at Mt. Jackson in the Valley that had been engaged with Sheridan's troopers.

They finally returned to New Market at the end of November 1864 to set up winter quarters. One of the men of the 51st described camp life at New Market that winter as bordering on starvation, with



soldiers in threadbare clothing and many of them with no shoes: “We are rite (sic) hard for something to eat and wear. Nearly one half of the men (are) naked in the way of jackets & pants and some are barefooted.”¹¹ He described the rations as very poor in quality and quantity, offering the men very little sustenance for the upcoming marches in driving snow.

On December 16, 1864, Richard Rakes and Columbus Rakes, along with the rest of the regiment, marched under orders toward Fishersville on the Virginia Central Railroad line between Staunton and Waynesboro. Their brother, Alexander Rakes, had been captured at Strasburg, Virginia, the previous October and had been first sent to Harper’s Ferry, then to Point Lookout, Maryland, as a prisoner of war. A similar fate had befallen their cousin, Charles Jackson Rakes, who was severely wounded in the hip at the battle of 3rd Winchester on September 19, 1864. Charles Jackson was captured by the Federals and taken to Baltimore, Maryland, where he was eventually released in a prisoner exchange toward the end of the war.¹²

Leaving New Market, the 51st Virginia marched for almost a week in heavy, drifting snow before they finally reached the little railroad depot of Fishersville. Again answering a call to duty, they aided Gen. Thomas Rosser’s cavalry regiment near Staunton, and repulsed Gen. Custer’s cavalry at Lacey Spring. They then traveled by rail to Charlottesville to meet another Federal threat, but unexpected reinforcements from Confederate forces at Gordonsville rendered their services unnecessary.

Returning to Fishersville, they joined the 45th and 50th Virginia infantry regiments and the 30th Battalion. Brigadier General Gabriel Wharton, the battalion’s commanding officer, held a total of 809 men in his dwindling brigade. In fact, the brigade would become the last of Jubal Early’s entire Confederate infantry in the Shenandoah Valley after Lee recalled the three divisions of the Second Corps to assist in the defense of Petersburg in 1865.¹³

The weather and the harsh conditions must have weighed heavily on the minds of the men as they awaited new orders to move out. Lt. Rufus Woolwine of the 51st, a neighbor of the Rakes’ who lived in a community that today bears his family name, opined in late February 1865, “Where oh where shall I be twelve months hence? Perhaps in vast eternity.”¹⁴



Finally, in late February the men received orders to prepare to move out again. Pickets were ordered set up around camp, and within a few days they were on the move toward Waynesboro in a driving sleet storm.

General Custer, perhaps anxious to repay the 51st for the skirmish defeat at Lacey Spring, met them as they prepared to cross the river heading east. The rag-tag 51st defiantly formed battle lines and, turning west, faced the approaching Federal cavalry at Waynesboro. With just 1,000 rifles and four pieces of artillery among the 809 men, Rakes and his fellow infantrymen readied themselves for the onslaught of mounted cavalry. Custer's horsemen, well-equipped and 7,500 strong, proved to be an overwhelming force: three regiments hit Gen. Wharton's men hard on the left flank until it finally buckled. Soon, confusion erupted, and Custer's men quickly surrounded the last of the Valley's Confederate infantry.¹⁵

For all intents and purposes, the Valley Campaign was over.

Richard Rakes was taken prisoner at Waynesboro, along with many of the remaining men of the 51st. His brother, Christopher Columbus Rakes, was severely wounded in his right thigh during the battle, but somehow managed to escape capture and was taken to the Confederate Hospital, Chimborazo, in Richmond on March 7, 1865, where he convalesced for the remainder of the war. Gen. Jubal Early barely escaped, but Lee relieved him of his command in March 1865, less than one month before the Army of Northern Virginia's surrender at Appomattox Court House. In his final letter to Early, Lee reasoned that he had grave reservations about Early's ability to inspire confidence in the men he would need to recruit to continue operations.¹⁶

Had Custer decided to crush the 51st Virginia and seek retribution at Waynesboro, it is very likely the Rakes brothers and their comrades would have perished in repeated assaults on Confederate lines. Ironically, Custer spared the 51st Virginia what Indian Chief Sitting Bull refused to spare Custer and his 7th U.S. Cavalry some twelve years later at the battle of Little Big Horn: total annihilation.

All of the Rakeses – brothers and cousins – eventually returned to Patrick County, Virginia, after the war to rebuild their families and farms. If not for their bravery – and the restraint showed by Gen. General George Custer – I might have never had the opportunity to relate this small piece of Shenandoah Valley history.



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Camp Rattlesnake: An Integrated Camp in a Segregated Society

by Sally Zaragoza

Sally Zaragoza is an archaeologist with the George Washington and Jefferson National Forest. She has been researching Civilian Conservation Corps Camps on the National Forest.

Introduction

Shortly after taking office in 1931, President Franklin Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) as an answer to rampant unemployment across the country. The Depression had left hundreds of thousands of people without jobs, particularly young men who were new to the workforce. These young men had no jobs and, worse yet, no purpose, which left them to wander the country in search of employment. Roosevelt believed the CCC could give these men jobs and skills for the future, while helping the country by building roads, planting trees, and protecting watersheds. The CCC ran from 1933 to 1942 and was the most popular of Roosevelt's New Deal Programs.

Roosevelt divided the responsibilities of creating the CCC among several established government departments: the Department of Labor enrolled the men; the War Department coordinated the logistics of building the camps and ordering supplies; and the Department of Interior and the Department of Agriculture found camp sites and organized and supervised work projects. The CCC was assigned two major tasks: to slow down the loss of natural resources and to improve forests to a point where they would be fit for public use.

The CCC enrollees were young men, between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five (this age limit would later change), unmarried, unemployed, and poor. War veterans and local experienced men (LEM's) were also hired. Over the life of the CCC, the Corp employed nearly three million men, roughly five percent of the male population of the United States.¹



Companies of approximately 200 young men formed and lived in camps. The camps usually were on state or federal land in forests and parks, and occasionally communities provided locations for camps. Their organization facilitated the growth and well-being of the enrollees. Each camp was like a “self sufficient model city.”² The camps normally included barracks, garages, a hospital, a recreation hall, a mess hall, a kitchen, a school, administrative buildings, bathrooms, and showers. Sporting and recreational facilities like swimming pools, horseshoe pits, tennis courts, boxing rings, baseball fields, and basketball courts were also built.

The CCC camps facilitated the well-being of the men and promoted citizenship. Approximately fifty-five percent of the enrollees were from rural areas and forty-five percent from an urban environment, forcing the men to learn to get along with people from different cultural backgrounds. The average grade level completed by an enrollee was the eighth grade, and many had never taken a shower or used a toothbrush.³ Regardless of background, the CCC gave enrollees occupational training, the opportunity for education, and a chance at a meaningful and healthy life.

The men received on the job training in a variety of skills including forestry, blacksmithing, wood shop, truck driving, cooking and baking, construction, dynamiting, heavy machinery use, and many others. More importantly, CCC men learned a work ethic: how to take and receive orders, safety, rules of conduct, right from wrong, and “the value of order, regularity, neatness, and independence.”⁴ The men’s work included, but was not limited to, planting trees, building roads, fighting fires, building dams, pest and erosion control, putting up telephone lines, and building administrative and residential buildings for the Forest Service.

The CCC in the Shenandoah Valley

In 1917, the Shenandoah National Forest, later renamed the George Washington National Forest, was created from three purchase units. The George Washington National Forest was the first recipient of a CCC company in April of 1933 at what would be named Camp Roosevelt on the Lee District.⁵

Two of the Ranger Districts formed by the creation of the National Forest included the Dry River and the Deerfield Ranger Districts. These districts would, in the twenty-first century, combine to become the North River Ranger District. The North River District



was home to four CCC camps each with its own unique history. One of these camps, Camp Rattlesnake, housed the African-American CCC Company 1334.

An amendment attached to the bill that put the CCC into existence forbade discrimination based on race. Although this amendment ensured, for the most part, that African-American men would have the opportunity to enroll in the CCC, it did not mean that communities would accept 200 young black men as their neighbors. Some communities would outright refuse to accept the young men, while other communities had to be threatened with the prospects of no CCC company to entice them to accept the men. Many citizens sent letters of complaint, signed petitions, and withdrew support of camps when notified that the occupying company would be an African-American company. This common occurrence made the placement of black companies difficult.⁶

A letter from the National Director of the CCC, Robert Fechner, described to Ohio Senators Robert J. Bulkley and Vic Donahey, the difficult task of placing black companies. Fechner wrote:

[T]here are communities and States that do not want and will not accept a Negro [CCC] company. This is particularly true in localities that have a negligible Negro population. There were so many vigorous complaints and protests that I felt it was necessary to direct Corps Area Commanders to find a location within their State of origin for all Negro [CCC] companies.⁷

A number of African-American companies in camps in western states contained enrollees from the Midwest, a fact that Fechner did not approve of and put a stop to in 1935. Many states, however, did not even want their own African-American citizens. Fechner, who was a Southerner, may have sympathized with communities that were less than happy to have a company of black men in their midst and often moved the black companies to a less hostile area to avoid forcing them to accept a black company.

Fechner recounted to the Ohio Senators that when, “the citizens of [an Ohio] community learned that a Negro company was to be sent to the camp, they absolutely refused to permit the company to occupy the camp and we were forced to completely abandon the project.”⁸ Because of this familiar occurrence, Fechner tried to apply pressure to state and local governments as is evident in his letter to



Camp Rattlesnake



Scenes from Camp Rattlesnake when it was a CCC camp: Top is a winter scene while the bottom two photos are an awards ceremony in the courtyard. (Photos on these two pages are courtesy of Wayne Goodall and Bill Stokes.)



*A sports team
from Camp
Rattlesnake
poses for a pho-
tograph.*



*The mess hall
and some bar-
racks*

*One of the
officers
quarters.*





the Ohio Senators in which he wrote, “we do not attempt to compel any community to accept a Negro company in a [CCC] camp against its will, but occasionally their refusal has meant that the camp would not be established.”⁹ The threat of a camp not being established was serious because it meant the loss of possible revenue for businesses from the young men’s buying potential and from economically beneficial projects not being completed.

Much of the information used to describe Camp Rattlesnake comes from archival documents received from the National Archives. Yearly Camp Inspection Reports provide a wealth of information, from what kind of work the men were doing to what they were eating. Local newspapers were also consulted to form a picture of how the local community felt about the African-American men in their presence.

Camp Goshen/Camp Rattlesnake NF-11

Camp Goshen, more commonly known Camp Rattlesnake, was first occupied on June 24, 1933, which was approximately a month later than the other three camps on the North River District. Camp Rattlesnake was located on the old Deerfield District, now part of the current North River District, in Augusta County, about eight miles south of the small town of Deerfield off state route 600.

Although the official policy stated that communities were to be notified before placement of an African-American company, the people living near Camp Rattlesnake apparently did not receive any notification. The *Staunton News Leader* illustrated this in articles about the camp. In the June 24, 1933, paper, there is an article about Company 1334’s plans to arrive in Camp Rattlesnake that evening. There is no mention of the men being black. The July 1, 1933, paper does mention that because the enrollees in this particular company are black, they will be serviced by black ministers from local black churches. In the July 6 and 9, 1933, editions it is revealed that the local people did not know their new neighbors would be black, and that they were not happy about it. The local people filed a complaint and believed Company 1334 would be moved to Jerkentight, Virginia; however, the locals relented and it was decided that the company would stay put. The paper wrote that, “army officers gave their assurance that if the camp proved a nuisance or objectionable to the property owners, it would be moved.”¹⁰ The minds of white community members may have been eased when they discovered that the African-American enrollees were being supervised by white officers.



The first Camp Report for Camp Rattlesnake was filed on January 30, 1934, by Special Investigator Charles Kenlan. The Camp Commander was W.M. Stokes, Jr., and the company's strength was 184 men from Maryland, Virginia, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania. There were also twenty-one local experienced men (LEMs) enrolled at the camp. The July 9, 1933, *Staunton News Leader* made a point to mention that there were eight white LEMs enrolled at the camp with more to be added later. These men would also have been white. White LEMs in an African-American camp was the norm. They were put in positions of authority, so mentioning that the LEMs were white in the article was another way to ease the fears of the local people. Kenlan reported that the enrollees' spirits were excellent and that the opinion of the locals was very favorable toward the men. There had been a little trouble in camp, however. One man was turned over to local authorities for violating the law, but Kenlan did not elaborate on what law was broken. He also wrote, though, that the men had completed eight thousand acres of timber stand improvement, rebuilt telephone lines, cut trails, cleaned up road sides, built bridges, and collected 140 bushels of seed.¹¹

The Supplementary Report for the January 30, 1934, Camp Report indicated that the enrollees participated in baseball, basketball, football, and boxing. As evidenced by newspaper articles¹² included with the report, the men of Camp Rattlesnake had considerable athletic ability with an undefeated football season. Church services were also popular with considerable involvement from local clergy. The camp contained a permanent and traveling library that included newspapers and magazines. Classes were also provided to the men five nights a week. Kenlan concluded his report with, "there has been a definite improvement in the physical condition, conduct and efficiency of enrolled men since camp occupation."¹³

Everything was not perfect at Camp Rattlesnake with the facilities or the men, however. Kenlan found one facility deficiency at the camp and sent an office memorandum to J.J. McEntee about the issue. Apparently, the enrollees had no bed comforters and half of the cots were made of wood, which meant they were in constant need of repair.¹⁴ Eventually a much more serious issue developed amongst the enrollees. Around September 1, 1933, twenty-one enrollees, all enrolled from Baltimore, were discharged from the CCC. Archival documents were not clear about the facts of the case, but they suggested the men were discharged for refusal to work and insubordi-



nation or because they had criminal records. Some documents indicated that after they were discharged it was learned that the men had criminal records. There was also questions about whether or not the men actually had records, or if it was thought they did because they were part of a club in Baltimore with a reputation for having many members with records for stealing cars and for burglary. Eventually, it was decided that regardless of whether or not the men had criminal records, they were still troublemakers and had refused to work; therefore, they were discharged for legitimate reasons.¹⁵

Another interesting sidenote came to light during the considerable correspondence concerning the twenty-one discharged men. In one of the many letters and memos sent back and forth about the men it was mentioned that there were forty-five white men enrolled at the camp. It appeared to have been added as an afterthought by Kenlan who perhaps wanted to warn J.J. McEntee in case a formal investigation was conducted into the dismissal of the twenty-one men. The statement appeared to be an afterthought because it was typed in a different typeface than the rest of the letter. The statement was, "this Camp has forty-five white men enrolled who mess, live separately, and work together. Although not practical, there has been no trouble."¹⁶

There were integrated camps in the CCC, but they were supposed to be in the West and Midwest where people were believed to be more tolerant than in the South. The head of the CCC, Robert Fechner, was a southerner, a Tennessee native. He was sensitive to the race issue and eventually in 1935 barred integrated camps all together. What makes the integration of Camp Rattlesnake particularly interesting is that integrated camps usually consisted of a strong majority of white men with just a small number of black men. Camp Rattlesnake was the opposite with a majority of black enrollees.¹⁷ These men were not LEMs because the camp report listed only twenty-one LEMs, and Kenlan wrote that there were forty-five white enrollees. Fechner wrote in a letter to Thomas Griffith, President of the NAACP, that, "while segregation has been the general policy, it has not been inflexible, and we have a number of companies containing a small number of negro enrollees."¹⁸ Why it was decided to place forty-five white men in an African-American Camp in the South, as opposed to placing them in one of the many white camps in the area, is a mystery.

Although many saw Virginia's relationship with African-Americans as paternalistic, it was still very much against any kind of integration. Through the first half of the twentieth century, there were



numerous bills and acts passed to help deal with any hints of integration amongst the people. In March of 1926, a bill for public segregation was passed by the Virginia legislature because of complaints about the lack of segregated seating at Hampton Institute. In 1930, the Racial Purity Act was passed to keep children with even a drop of black blood out of white schools.¹⁹ Integration of any kind would just lead to more integration was the general attitude of the time.

This attitude is evidenced by the August 1935 edition of *The Tattler*, Camp Rattlesnake's newspaper. It is clear that the white men were given positions of supervision or power. The article stated that because eight former white enrollees had been transferred or discharged by order of the Commanding General of the Third Corps Area there were new men filling the positions of Sr. Foreman, Mess Steward, Forestry Clerk, Blacksmith, Exchange Steward, and Bugler.²⁰ It was in July 1935 that Fechner banned integrated camps, so it is likely the white men were ordered to leave the camp because of his directive.

Camp Rattlesnake experienced trouble on Friday, March 15, 1935. Commander Stokes took a couple days of leave placing First Lieutenant D.J. Wooley in charge. Enrollee James Robinson requested a weekend pass from Wooley who turned it down because the men had make-up work to do on Saturday. Robinson was not pleased with this outcome and decided to start drinking with a few other guys in the barracks. This created a disturbance. A night guard investigated and tried to deal with the commotion along with the barracks leader, but they could not handle it. Eventually Wooley and the Sr. Foreman, A.H. Glover, arrived on the scene, Wooley armed with a personal pistol and Glover with a blackjack. In the process of trying to remove Robinson from the barracks, Glover struck him over the head with the blackjack twice and Wooley pulled his pistol on him. Robinson went with the men to the company office where he was given medical attention and the local authorities were called. Two enrollees, Alonzo Bell and Paul Proctor, who had also been drinking, came to the office to try to help keep Robinson out of jail but were thrown out of the office. The sheriff arrived and handcuffed Robinson. Enrollee Raymond Brown tried to interfere but was also arrested along with Bell. Proctor took off and was not arrested but was discharged from the CCC the next day. Robinson was given ninety days in jail, Bell thirty days, and Brown ten days.²¹

The *Staunton News-Leader* reported on the incident on March 17, 1935. The article said that three enlisted youths had been arrested



following a scuffle at the camp. Interestingly, the article specifically said that only one of the boys arrested was African-American. Most of the letters and reports about the incident do not list a “race” for the men, but there is one report that puts a “C” behind Robinson’s name which presumably stood for colored. No letter was placed behind the names of Bell, Proctor, or Brown. Another letter referred to two “negro” enrollees being involved in the incident. One report also mentioned that Robinson had attended a local dance for black people a couple weekends before where he was shot in the buttocks. The newspaper article in the *Staunton News-Leader*, however, only lists Bell as black.²² It is unclear if the paper mistakenly listed Bell as black instead of Robinson, or if they were both black. Either way, there is evidence that at least one of the men involved in the incident was white. This suggests that although the black and white men were supposed to live and mess separately in camp, there was obviously enough interaction between the two groups through their work or their free time that a white man was arrested for defending a black man.

Although three men were arrested and discharged from the CCC, it took a little while for things to get back to normal at camp. One report described an incident between the Sr. Foreman, Glover, and a black cook the morning after the incident. The cook made remarks to Glover that he interpreted as a threat. Glover found some help to confront the cook, but the cook took off, never to be seen in camp again. On the Sunday after the commotion, Commander Stokes returned and was given a letter by Edward Smith signed by fifteen of the men requesting a meeting with him. Stokes did not comply and eventually questioned the fifteen men leading to Smith’s discharge.²³ Smith later appealed his discharge, but it is unknown what the results of his appeal were. Another letter in the archival documents dated March 16, 1935 read:

I am writing in regard as to the treatment of the colored enrollees in the 1334 company.

Friday night, there was a disturbance between two of the boys. Two of the officers in the company ordered one of the boys down to the headquarters and before the boy could get straight to go the Lieutenant drew a gun on him while the sergeant beat him across the head and eyes with a blackjack.

I think the boys they had arrested should be given a fair trial by the proper authorities.”²⁴

The letter was signed, all members of 1334 Company. There was no corresponding document to indicate what happened to the men who wrote the letter or whether it was even investigated.



The investigation into the incidents that occurred over the weekend of March 16, 1935, concluded that there were numerous reasons for the disturbance and the escalation that accompanied it. The first reason listed was the presence of an “Afro-American” newspaper that the investigator believed was a bad influence on the men because of its emphasis on race discrimination. Also, the fact that the Camp Commander was gone for the weekend was believed to have contributed to the incident. The report also found that the barracks leader and night guard should have been able to handle the incident without ever dragging Wooley and Glover into the mix.²⁵

Assistant Director of the CCC, J.J. McEntee wrote a letter to Charles Kenlan suggesting he investigate the incident when he had the opportunity. McEntee mentioned in his letter that their records indicated that there was a “sprinkling” of white men in the black company.²⁶ Kenlan investigated the incident and had no recommendations. He did, however, mention that he didn’t think that Wooley should be assigned to a black company again.²⁷

Kenlan inspected the camp on April 15, 1935. The company’s strength was much lower at 125 men than it had been in January of 1934. Kenlan found the men’s morale to be good and reported that they had built roads and trails, engaged in forest improvement, and had constructed and maintained telephone lines. The men played baseball, basketball, volleyball, boxed, had a quartet, played the piano, and read books for recreation. Local ministers were still involved with religious services in the camp and a new African American educational advisor had arrived in camp. His vocational program of study for the enrollees included cooking, plumbing, typing, writing, talk, health, debating, first aid, carpentry, and auto mechanics. In general, Kenlan found the camp to be satisfactory in spite of the recent problems.²⁸

Camp Rattlesnake’s camp newspaper, *The Tattler*, was a monthly paper that ran from June 1935 to September 1935. The four editions shed light on what was important to the enrollees. The newspapers are filled with information about their work accomplishments, classes offered, enrollees leaving and entering the company, sports, and laughter. The newspapers contained several lighthearted columns including a column entitled “Mr. ‘X’ Says” that focused on gossip about enrollees and the girls they fancied. Some of the accomplishments written about in the newspaper included several men attending a lifeguard-type class in Yorktown, fighting forest fires, improving the camp, construction of



Clayton Mill Creek Road, and construction of a trail on Mill Mountain between the lookout and Panther Gap. An August 1935 article mentioned that the CCC was starting a new policy in which black reserve officers would be appointed to black camps as doctors, chaplains, and educational directors.

The September 1935 paper followed up on this with the announcement that the camp had received a new African-American surgeon. Interestingly, the article mentioned that although no enrollees had been in the hospital since his arrival, several “neighbors” had used his services. The camp was in a location of almost entirely white people, which would mean that the “neighbors” were likely white people.²⁹

Camp Rattlesnake closed its doors on October 10, 1935.³⁰ The September 1935 edition of *The Tattler* gives no indication that they knew or were expecting the closure. The paper, in fact, reported that not only had they received a new doctor in camp, but they had also received a new Camp Commander, Earl N. Fullor, and new enrollees to bring their strength to 200 men.³¹

Conclusion

Although the camp came to what appeared to be an abrupt end, the work the men accomplished and a trace of the camp remain decades later. The men built miles of roads, trails, and telephone lines, and planted and improved thousands of acres of forest. Their efforts changed the landscape of the area and also impacted the community in which they lived and spent their free time and money.

The standing buildings constructed by and associated with Camp Rattlesnake and the other CCC camps should be protected and maintained, when feasible, as well as the remains of the camps. The buildings and remains are important reminders of a program that helped millions of people, helped bring an end to the Depression, and helped create the nation’s National Forests.

The fact that this Southern CCC camp was integrated did not appear to have an effect on what the young men were able to accomplish. Although the men were reportedly separated by race, there is evidence of camaraderie between the men and likely friendships. The willingness of at least one white enrollee to stand up to the authorities to help his black friend indicates that the men at Camp Rattlesnake may have learned more about being a man than the average CCC enrollee.



Evidence for Camp Rattlesnake remains today. The top left photo is a stone walkway, the chimney is what remains of an officers quarters, and the bottom photo is the bathroom. (Photos by Nancy Sorrells)





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²McEntee, *Final Report*, 25.

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⁴*Ibid.*, 59, 60.

⁵National Forests are divided into districts for management purposes.

⁶See Olen Cole, *The African-American Experience in the Civilian Conservation Corps*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999). Calvin W. Gower, "The Struggle of Blacks for Leadership Positions in the Civilian Conservation Corps: 1933-1942," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (April 1976): 123-135. Charles Johnson, "The Army, the Negro and the Civilian Conservation Corps: 1933-1942," *Military Affairs*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (October 1972): 82-88. John A. Salmond, "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (June 1965): 75-88. John A. Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study*, (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1967) for more discussion on the difficulties faced by African-Americans during the enrollment process, during camp location selection, and in trying to gain positions of authority and power in the CCC.

⁷Robert Fechner to Robert J. Bulkley and Vic Donahey, 4 June 1936, copy posted on <http://newdeal.feri.org/aaccc05.htm>.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰*The Staunton News Leader*, 6 July 1933.

¹¹Charles Kenlan, Camp NF-11-VA, Camp Report, 30 January 1934, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; Record Group 35-115, 1158.

¹²These newspaper articles were included in archival documents. They contained no citation.

¹³Charles Kenlan, Camp NF-11-VA, Supplementary Report, 30 January 1934, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; Record Group 35-115, 1158.

¹⁴Charles Kenlan, Camp NF-11-VA, Office Memorandum to J.J. McEntee, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; Record Group 35-115, 1158.

¹⁵Series of letters included in Camp NF-11-VA, Camp Report, February-March 1934, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; Record Group 35-115, 1158.

¹⁶Charles Kenlan, Camp NF-11-VA, Office Memorandum to J.J. McEntee, Received 1 February 1934, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; Record Group 35-115, 1158.

¹⁷There is evidence that there was a second reversed integrated camp in Virginia, also on the US Forest Service, F-10-VA, Camp Snowden. Their white men may have all been LEMs, however. It is still being researched.

¹⁸Robert Fechner to Thomas L. Griffith, 21 September 1935, "CCC Negro Selection" file, General Correspondence of the Director, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; Record Group 35, Box 700.

¹⁹J. Douglas Smith, *Managing White Supremacy: Race, Politics, and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 117, 227.

²⁰*The Tattler*, Camp NF-11-VA Newspaper, August 1935.

²¹Riley E. McGarraugh to Commanding General, Third Corps Area, Camp NF-11-VA, Report on Disturbance at Camp Rattlesnake, 19 March 1935, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; Record Group 35-115, 1158.

²²*The Staunton News-Leader*, 17 March 1935.

²³Riley E. McGarraugh to Commanding General, Third Corps Area, Camp NF-11-VA, Report on Disturbance at Camp Rattlesnake, 19 March 1935, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; Record Group 35-115, 1158. Smith appealed the discharge but it is unclear what the outcome of his appeal was.

²⁴Letter from Members of Company 1334, Camp NF-11-VA, 16 March 1935, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; Record Group 35-115, 1158.

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²⁸Charles Kenlan, Camp NF-11-VA, Camp Report and Supplementary Report, 16 April 1935, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; Record Group 35-115, 1158.

²⁹*The Tattler*, Camp NF-11-VA Newspaper, June-September 1935.

³⁰Otis, *Forest Service and Civilian Conservation Corps*, 100.

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Book Reviews

[Editor's Note: The following section consists of reviews of recent books on regional and Virginia history as well as several that pertain to the history of the South. Unless otherwise noted, these reviews are by AHB Book Review Editor and Associate Editor Daniel A. Métraux, Professor of Asian Studies at Mary Baldwin College. Please send any reviews or questions about reviews to the AHB's Book Review Editor, Daniel Métraux at dmetraux@mbc.edu or Dept. of Asian Studies, Mary Baldwin College, Staunton, VA 24401. The deadline for all reviews for the 2010 Bulletin is October 1, 2010.]

Harold Holzer, *Lincoln President Elect: Abraham Lincoln and the Great Secession Winter, 1860-1861*. New York and London: Simon and Schuster, 2008. 624 pp.

Many people have found interesting parallels between the inauguration proceedings of President Barack Obama and those of Abraham Lincoln. One of these parallels is the fact that Obama went on a tour of various cities before making his way to his inauguration by train from Philadelphia and Baltimore. Lincoln also embarked on a lengthy nearly three-week long train trek from Springfield, Illinois, to Washington, finishing his trip also on a jaunt from Philadelphia through Baltimore to the District of Columbia. But there is a crucial difference!

While Obama traveled through Baltimore from Pennsylvania in style, Lincoln, warned of a very probable assassination plot in Baltimore, traveled incognito with one guard in a hidden compartment and arrived in Washington entirely unnoticed. Lincoln's quiet arrival in Washington made him a laughing stock in the national press inspiring jokes and cartoons, including one of Lincoln cowering behind the sliding door of a freight train whilst staring in alarm as a tiny cat hisses at him outside the car.

This small episode is part of a very lengthy and probing study of Lincoln's life as a President-elect between November of 1860 and March of 1861. Author Harold Holzer, cochairman of the U.S. Lincoln Bicentennial and author or co-author of thirty books on Lincoln and the Civil War, has produced a masterpiece that gives a very intimate portrait of Lincoln as he prepared to ascend to the presidency. Lincoln was very much a sectional candidate, receiving all but 26,000 of his nearly two million votes in the north—he only received 2,000 votes here in Virginia (and many of his "Southern" votes came from the Republican city of St. Louis). But from the start Lincoln was determined to save the Union.

One thing that Lincoln made clear in his public statements during this period was that while he would not move to eliminate slavery in the southern states where it already existed, he would strongly adhere



to the Republican platform that steadfastly opposed the expansion of slavery to any new territory or state. Lincoln also strongly opposed any efforts by Democrats or even members of his own party to become engaged in compromise negotiations with the South on this issue, saying that one compromise would give way to yet another, thus giving the South its wishes in the end. Needless to say, while his uncompromising stance was popular with many in the North, many Democrats in the North and South accused Lincoln of needlessly causing the South to secede and dragging the U.S. into a civil war.

One of the many Lincoln stories mentioned here that vividly shows Lincoln's personality occurred shortly before his inauguration. When some visitors urged Lincoln not to coerce the South in any way by reinforcing federal forts in the South or collecting revenues there, Lincoln responded with a tale from "Aesop's Fables." The tale concerned a lovesick lion who proposed to a beautiful woman. Her fearful parents demanded that he first consent to have his sharp claws and teeth removed so as not to injure their frail daughter. But as soon as the lion had done this, they took clubs and knocked him senseless on the head. Lincoln said that the moral was clear—he would not allow himself to be defanged or clubbed into submission even before becoming President.

Holzer provides a detailed study of Lincoln's life in Springfield after the election as he was besieged not only by well-wishers, but also mobs of office seekers that included high officials seeking posts in the cabinet to others seeking to become postmasters throughout the country or chefs in the White House. We then stop with Lincoln as his presidential trains took him from Illinois east through Ohio, up through New York and then through New Jersey and Pennsylvania to Washington. We see how Lincoln introduced himself to the people of America through countless speeches – ironically as another American president, Jefferson Davis, made a similar train trip through the South to his inauguration in Montgomery, Alabama (Holzer helpfully lets us tune in now and then on Davis' train ride to Alabama and the adoring crowds who met him on the way. Lincoln was the better speaker of the two, but Davis' speeches, when printed next to Lincoln's off-the-cuff remarks on train platforms, made the future Confederate leader look the more mature statesman). We see how Lincoln continually fine-tuned his inaugural speech while building a broad-based cabinet. We also learn that Lincoln forgot to pay his hotel bill at the Willard Hotel when he went to his inaugural and only later got a bill for \$773.75. And most of all we see everywhere how impressed the public was with Lincoln was when he met them in public—and how well people warmed to Lincoln when they met him in person.

When he reaches Lincoln's inaugural, Holzer slows down to observe:



He [Lincoln] was ready at last to serve. The long interregnum – the cold winter of secession – the frustration of responsibility without power – was finally over. The crisis of the Union was beginning in earnest. Lincoln had successfully maintained a masterly inactivity and public silence to prevent the spread of slavery, privately fought a bare-knuckle political battle to bar unprincipled compromise, and brilliantly introduced himself to the press and the people of the North with a new look, new images, and a new style of informal oratory along a triumphant voyage to the capital. And then, despite a giant step backward at Baltimore that might have crippled less agile leaders, he had recaptured public confidence while harmonizing a balanced and brilliant cabinet. And he had crafted one of the nimblest and most eloquent of all inaugural addresses, one that not only reiterated his devotion to the rule of law and invoked the emotional power of national tradition, but also maintained that slavery could be contained without compromising founding principles. But of course, the greatest challenge – “the tug,” as Lincoln had called it – was yet to come. (458)

Harold Holzer has written a very well researched, highly detailed, and very objective study of this crucial but little known period in Lincoln’s life. We see a Lincoln, at first a bit tentative about the huge office and crisis facing him, but daily growing more confident in his abilities and in his desire to save the Union. We see Lincoln as a master politician, but also as a human prone to gaffs and contradiction. Holzer captures the real Lincoln – and that is what makes this work so useful.

Annette Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2008. 798 pp. ISBN: 9780393064773

By now any American with a sense of the nation’s history will have heard of the liaison between President Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings that probably resulted in at least one child. Author Annette Gordon-Reed, a professor of Law at New York Law School and a professor of history at Rutgers University, is convinced that there was a deep sexual relationship between Jefferson and Hemings and goes to great lengths to prove her point.

Gordon-Reed’s study is much more than an overview of the sexual adventures of the master of Monticello. What is groundbreaking here is her broader analysis of the relationship between masters and their slaves in Virginia in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Without any civil rights and any protection from legal authorities, masters could treat their slaves in any way they wished. The reviewer of this book in *The New York Times* mentions an 1800 painting, entitled “Virginia luxuries,” where a white slave owner raises his right arm to whip the back of a male slave while simultaneously caressing a black woman who has no choices but to succumb to his advances.



This painting symbolizes many of the cruel contradictions of Virginia society before the Civil War. Jefferson could talk all he wanted to about human liberty and the inalienable rights of the individual, but he was also a major slave owner who bought and sold many slaves during his lifetime and clearly seduced Sally Hemings, persuading her to return with him from Paris even though she knew that if she stayed there, she would no longer be a slave. Gordon-Reed does a superb job dissecting the rarely discussed but very open sexual relationships that existed between master and slave in Virginia. This facet of the book alone makes it worthwhile reading.

Gordon-Reed's account starts out with a long narrative on the life of Elizabeth Hemings, born in 1735, the daughter of an African woman and a white sea captain. She bore six children with an unknown black man and another six, including Sally, with her owner, John Wayles, Jefferson's father-in-law. Sally was thus the half-sister of Jefferson's short-lived wife, Martha. The Hemings family went to Monticello as part of Martha's inheritance and became the sole property of Jefferson. The author goes into tremendous detail about the lives of everybody in the Hemings family for several generations.

The reader will learn a great amount about Virginia society and slavery 200 years ago, but getting through all 800 pages of this book requires a huge amount of time and dedication. It is well written and researched, but I would have appreciated a shorter and more focused work.

Edmund D. Potter, *A Guide to Historic Staunton, Virginia*. Charleston S.C.: The History Press, 2008. ISBN: 978-1-59629-543-8.

Good guidebooks should be written by bona fide historians familiar with the areas they are describing. Staunton is most fortunate to have a superb guide written by young and very gifted historian, Edmund D. Potter. His recent book, *A Guide to Historic Staunton, Virginia*, is a meticulously written and richly illustrated history of one of this country's greatest urban treasures. Potter provides the interested reader with both an overview of the city's history and a street-by-street walking tour of its many historic neighborhoods.

Potter begins his work with both a history of the city and region and an analysis of historic preservation efforts that have made Staunton's core areas very much a living museum. He points out that when dealing with an area replete with as many historic structures as are found in Staunton, the city has several choices of what to do. One can tear down the old and build anew. A second choice is to stabilize and then restore a building to a certain time period. The third option is adaptive reuse. "This recognizes that times and people change, but we can still appreciate the past. As an example, a factory can become a series of artists' studios. This is in effect what Staunton has done. Residents have



saved much of the character of downtown while adapting it to the needs of the present and hopefully the future.”

Potter divides his book into several clearly delineated chapters. The first, “Crossroads of the Valley,” provides a coherent summary of the region’s history. “Newtown “ provides an exhaustive street-by-street view of perhaps the core of old Staunton with its many restored mansions and homes. Chapters on the graves of Staunton and “The Railroad and the Wharf” provide very useful and interesting insights into the city’s graveyards and their history as well as some interesting perspectives on Staunton’s former importance as a major railway link to the region. Potter correctly reminds us that during the Civil War Staunton’s rail link was critical in the feeding of Lee’s army in central Virginia.

One of the most interesting and unusual chapters, “A Different Perspective,” focuses on the rich African-American heritage of Staunton. There has always been a large African-American population here. One figure that Potter provides that stunned me was the number of Free Blacks in the area in 1860 – 106 in Staunton and 586 in Augusta County. Blacks made up a quarter of the city’s population by 1800 – most of them slaves. The result is a rich cultural and architectural history including numerous churches and schools very well portrayed in Potter’s book.

A final chapter, “Turning Things Around,” provides a useful and concise history of the by-now very successful efforts to restore the many treasures of old Staunton. Potter notes that while “Historic Staunton led many of the early [preservation / restoration] fights, downtown Staunton’s present appearance would not exist without broad community support.”

Potter deserves strong praise and admiration for this excellent historical guide. There are a few typos that need to be cleaned up and any future edition really could use an index. The inclusion of an index would make it very much easier to find names of people and buildings mentioned in the text.

Deidre Hiner, *Voices of Small Town Business: Portraits of Monterey, Virginia*. Monterey VA: Published by Author, 2009. 82 pages.

One of my proudest moments as a teacher came in April 2009 at the senior defense of one of my finest students at Mary Baldwin College, Deidre Hiner. Hiner, a native of Monterey and Highland County, has a deep love for the history and culture of her town and region. Working closely with a number of MBC professors including Edmund Potter and Jim Sconyers and, to a lesser extent, this writer, Hiner embarked on an ambitious senior project that included: extensive oral interviews with business owners and employees in Monterey; a series of photographs of businesses and other scenes from the Monterey area; and publication of a hardback book with the interviews and photo-



graphs. Hiner's defense went beautifully and this summer she published her book, *Voices of Small Town Business: Portraits of Monterey, Virginia*.

Hiner completed fifteen individual interviews focusing on four small businesses in Monterey: the old H & H Cash Store, Evelyn's Pantry, the Highland Inn, and Mariah Boone: Custom, Vintage and Estate Jewelry. The interviewees include owners, workers, and customers. These interviews are fully published here and are accompanied by some excellent photographs of Monterey. If anything, we recognize Hiner's great artistic ability as a photographer. Hiner also includes some vintage photographs of Monterey obtained from the Highland County Historical Society.

The interviews are also very well done. Hiner's exploration of the lives of fifteen Monterey residents presents an excellent social portrait of both Monterey and Highland County. It is a poor and isolated region with a rugged beauty and sense of community that keeps many of its natives there and has attracted numerous people escaping from busier metropolitan areas. Hiner's interviews capture the strong personalities of her subjects and the flavor of life in this rustic environment.

We learn from Hiner's interviews that businesses truly struggle to survive in Highland County. There is little personal wealth here and many local concerns depend on the tourist trade. We learn from Debbie Morse, owner of the beautiful historic Highland Inn, how difficult it is to keep both the inn (eighteen rooms) and restaurant open during the current financial crisis. The annual Maple Festival in March has a huge impact on the inn and on other establishments in Monterey. The hope of all the interviewees is that they can weather the current slowdown and recover when prosperity returns. Above all, they love their town and wish to keep their roots firmly planted in Highland County.

Hiner has brought Highland County to life through her splendid work!

Alice Davis Wood, *Dorothea Dix and Dr. Francis T. Stribling: An Intense Friendship—Letters: 1849-1874*. Bloomington IN: Xlibris Corp., 2008. ISBN: 978-1-4257-9791-1 155 pp.

Alice Davis Wood of Waynesboro has produced a fascinating book that links two nineteenth century social reformers, Dorothea Dix (1802-1887) and Dr. Francis T. Stribling (1810-1874). Dix was an activist on behalf of the indigent insane who pioneered efforts to provide them with better care and facilities. Over the course of her long career which involved considerable travel in the United States and abroad. She founded or enlarged thirty-two mental hospitals in fifteen states and other hospitals in Canada, Britain, Europe and Japan. She also played a key role in creating fifteen schools for the feeble-minded, a school for the blind, several training schools for nurses, and she personally worked to ameliorate conditions in almshouses and prisons.



Stribling's career had a major impact on Staunton during the middle of the nineteenth century. Born in Augusta County, he was the first graduate of the University of Virginia's new medical school and he served as the second head of Western State Hospital in Staunton from 1836 to 1874. He authored a substantial revision of the Virginia laws governing the insane and helped to found an association that eventually became the American Psychiatric Society. Wood writes: "During his tenure at Western State...., Stribling advanced the care and cure of the mentally ill in Virginia and throughout the South. His story and that of his hospital, in microcosm, is the story of 19th century psychiatry and disputes about race, gender, class and politics.... "

While researching her earlier book, *Dr. Francis T. Stribling and Moral Medicine* at Western State's archives, Wood discovered twenty-five letters from Dix to Stribling. Further research led to the discovery of letters from Stribling to Dix that were archived at Harvard's Houghton Library. The rejoining of this correspondence provides the substance for this current volume.

I found the most interesting and useful part of the book to be the extensive background chapters that Wood wrote on Dix and Stribling. Dix was one of those unheralded heroes of the social reform movements of the nineteenth century who deserves far more attention than she gets. Wood's chapter on Stribling is also a good introduction to the history of Western State and the growth of Staunton into a center for medical care. We also learn about the many changes that occurred in the care for the insane in Virginia under Stribling's stewardship. Dr. Hobart Hansen of Western State wrote in 1967: "Dr. Stribling created a golden age at Western State. He had no tranquilizers, no shock treatment, and knew nothing of psychoanalysis. Yet, out of his simple business, he had remarkable success in rehabilitation of the insane..."

The letters, which make up the bulk of the book, give one an opportunity to get to know Dix and Stribling very well. We also become privy to their feelings about a whole range of issues facing Staunton, the South and the U.S. in the difficult years before, during, and after the Civil War.

Wood's book on Stribling and Dix is an important and useful contribution to the history of Western State, the care of the insane and feeble-minded in the nineteenth-century, and to the social reform movements of that epoch. One caveat is that the author has published the book with an on-line vanity press, meaning the book has not undergone a thorough editing or scholarly review.

Julius W. Gaines Jr. *Old Uniontown—Glances Backwards: Commentary and Oral History Through 1920*. Staunton VA: African-American Heritage Festival Foundation of Staunton VA, 2007. 50 pp. \$11.95

Old Uniontown was once a thriving African-American community that grew in the latter half of the nineteenth century in Augusta County around National Avenue due north of the National Cemetery



on what is now Richmond Avenue. Settlements like Uniontown grew across the South after the end of Reconstruction. Although the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution guaranteed freedom, citizenship and suffrage, the withdrawal of federal troops and the inauguration of the “separate but equal” doctrine saw the implementation of the ugly forms of segregation that persevered through the 1950s and 1960s. Other similar communities included Jonesboro near Buffalo Gap, Newport near Middlebrook, and Kiddsville near Fishersville.

African-Americans, no longer slaves, were forced to survive on their own. Although many eventually migrated to the North, a good number stayed in the South. It is estimated that there were 7,085 African-American residents in Augusta County in 1880 and 5,700 in 1900. They formed communities like Old Uniontown where they owned or rented land and had their own schools, churches, stores, and cemeteries.

The census of 1920 counted sixty-four “heads of households” in Uniontown. It was a stable community where most adults could find jobs working in local industries or serving the white community downtown by washing clothes and other related activities.

The Union Church, local stores, the village school, and stable families all served as firm anchors for the community. One critical problem was the lack of medical care – African-Americans were not allowed in the hospital in Staunton and could only receive medical attention by traveling, often by cart or on horseback, to a hospital in Charlottesville or by paying one white doctor in Staunton who would make house calls.

Annexation, rezoning, outward migration, the closing of the bridge on National Avenue linking Uniontown to Staunton as well as a whole host of other factors gradually led to the decline of the settlement after World War I. Although a few of the older houses are still inhabited, the community as a whole lost its church, stores, school, and most inhabitants and houses. By the 1990s Old Uniontown existed only in the minds of its few surviving aging former residents.

Fortunately Dr. Gaines and his colleagues have been able to reconstruct Uniontown through extensive interviews with six elderly former residents of the village who grew up there and who had distinct memories of life there decades ago. We are presented in this book with a surprisingly detailed view of many aspects of life in the now abandoned settlement.

Dr. Gaines’ *Old Uniontown Glances Backwards* shows how one can reconstruct a community that has disappeared almost without a trace. This work is a valuable addition to the published work on the area and a good case study of how African-Americans managed to create a community in the post-Civil War era.



Historic Houses of Staunton, Virginia. Pen & Ink Drawings of Fifty Homes by Joe Nutt. Historical Narratives by Joe Nutt, Marney Gibbs and Others. Staunton VA: Mid Valley Press, 2008.

Staunton proudly calls itself the “Queen City” and boasts a beautifully restored downtown area that attracts great numbers of admiring tourists every year. One of my great pleasures in life is walking up along East Beverley Street and through other older parts of the city to admire the great many grand houses that one can find across the city.

While the city invested a huge amount of money, time, and work to beautify the downtown over the past decade, it has taken equal amounts of dedication and work by the private owners of many of these marvelous old houses to restore them to their former beauty and grandeur. It is this combination of both private and public initiatives that has helped to restore the beauty of the city. Staunton was attractive in some areas, but in parts a rather seedy city when I moved here nearly three decades ago. But now the city has experienced a genuine renaissance that makes it a gem today.

When I go on my periodic tours of old Staunton, I often wonder about the history of many of the residences I am passing. Joe Nutt and Marney Gibbs through his eye-catching artwork and through their collective research and writing have created the ultimate guide to historic Staunton. Nutt’s very detailed pen and ink drawings provide very fine depictions of each of the houses described in the book. Each picture is accompanied by a very detailed description and history of the house—who built it, who was born there and who lived there over the decades. Nutt and Gibbs did much of the research and writing, but there are instances where other local writers have contributed extensive information about individual structures.

The book is well organized with two handy maps, a detailed index, and other useful tools to guide the reader through the historic sections of Staunton. We are also treated to a drawing of the grave of Staunton founder John Lewis as well as a depiction of the John Lewis monument. The very clear writing makes for easy fast reading.

Nicolaus Mills, Winning the Peace: The Marshall Plan & America’s Coming of Age as a Superpower. Hoboken NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2008. 290pp.

One Saturday in late September, 2008, I took my visiting German cousin, Harald Geiss, to visit the Marshall Museum at the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington Virginia. Geiss, the director of the bureau in Germany’s Ministry of Education that, among other things, oversees the teaching of the history of the Holocaust to German students, especially wanted to see the Marshall exhibit and the Nobel Peace Prize medal that former Secretary of State George Marshall had won in 1953 for his role in the reconstruction of Europe after World War II. Geiss noted that Marshall more than any other individual played a critical role in reviving Europe



and in orchestrating the path for Germany's return to the European community. Before we left I went to the museum gift shop and purchased Nicholas Mills' fascinating study, *Winning the Peace: The Marshall Plan & America's Coming of Age as a Superpower* to see if my cousin's reflections were accurate.

Mills provides brilliant coverage of the events leading to the implementation of the Marshall plan. The situation in 1947 in Europe was dire. World War II had brought far more destruction and dislocation than anyone had thought imaginable, and European nations, both victors and those vanquished, were suffering. Mills quotes Hamilton Fish Armstrong, the editor of *Foreign Affairs*: "The 1947 visitor finds Europe abstracted and preoccupied. Every minute is dedicated to scrounging enough food, clothing and fuel to carry through the next 24 hours.... There is too little of almost everything — too few trains, trams, busses and automobiles to transport people to work on time, let alone to take them on holidays; too little flour to make bread without adulterants, and even so not enough bread to provide energies for hard labor; too little paper for newspapers to report more than a fraction of the world's news; too little seed for planting and too little fertilizer to nourish it; too few houses to live in, and not enough glass to supply them with window panes."

A cold winter and bad harvests only compounded the problem. Europe was in desperate shape and Marshall, who had been President Roosevelt's military Chief of Staff during the war before being named Truman's Secretary of State, firmly believed that American economic and technical assistance would be vital if Europe was to recover. European people and governments were too poor to even feed themselves properly and they lacked the resources and funds to rebuild their factories and modernize their industries. There was considerable labor unrest and Communist parties in France and elsewhere were doing well in local and national elections. Clearly any thought of European recovery was impossible without a considerable amount of aid from the United States. Marshall and other American leaders also feared that the very survival of liberal democracy in Europe, one of the chief aims of the recent war, was at stake.

Marshall lobbied hard to garner support from a Republican Congress and to persuade interested European nations to work together to develop plans to rebuild their economies with American assistance once Congress approved the idea. During the next few years some thirteen billion dollars in economic and technical assistance were given to help the recovery of European countries which had joined in the Organization for European Economic Cooperation. By the time the plan had come to completion, the economies of every participant state, with the exception of Germany, had grown well past pre-war levels. Over the next two decades, many regions of Western Europe experienced unprecedented growth and prosperity. European cooperation in working with the



Marshall Plan also helped pave the way for the first steps toward European economic integration. The fact that West Germany was included in the plan helped in its rapid recovery and rapprochement with France and other European states.

Mills, who is Professor of American Studies at Sarah Lawrence College, offers the following reflection on the Marshall Plan:

From America, Western Europe got a postwar version of the New Deal, and, as a consequence, Western Europe avoided an era of extended social unrest in which the economic problems that World War II had caused would have worsened. After 1948, the European recipients of Marshall Plan aid were able to increase their imports, raise productivity, and generate levels of capital formation that allowed them to begin rebuilding their infrastructure. The power of political moderates, who could point to the economic difference that the Marshall Plan made, was strengthened, and the pressure to make German reparations key to rebuilding Europe was in turn reduced. Marshall Plan aid turned out to be far more predictable and far more useful than any goods or property that could be extracted from a defeated Germany.

The Marshall Plan, in the words of the late Larry Bland, Senior Director of the George C. Marshall Foundation, "was a nation-building effort aimed at nothing less than the reorganization of European capitalism."

Mills' study has recaptured the entire history and scope of the plan and offers superb critical analysis for both its successes and problems. He treats Marshall in a highly respectful manner, but is not afraid to include his blemishes as well as his bright spots. The book is thoroughly researched and is written in a clear and lively manner that will attract both the scholar and lay reader. Local readers and interested visitors would do well to both read this book and visit the Marshall museum at VMI.

Jon Meacham, *American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House*. New York: Random House, 2008. 483 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4000-6325-3

January 1833! The nation stood on the brink of collapse. South Carolina had passed a bill of nullification defying the authority of the federal government and had begun military preparations to resist any attempt by Jackson to suppress their goals. President Andrew Jackson, sitting in the White House, sponsored a bill of force giving him authority to raise forces to put down the potential South Carolina rebellion. In Richmond, Virginia Governor Floyd said that if Jackson used force to suppress South Carolina, "I will oppose him with a military force. I nor my country will be enslaved without a struggle." Other Southern states were prepared to join Virginia in defense of their region. Civil War was certainly a possibility.

Ultimately Jackson's show of force and a compromise bill sponsored by Senator Henry Clay on tariffs ended the crisis. One wonders whether



President Buchanan in the last critical months of his failed presidency could have avoided the Civil War with a similar show of force against renegade rebels in Charleston, South Carolina. Certainly by the time that Lincoln took power in March of 1861, it was too late because the South had had ample time to organize both an army and a government.

The Nullification Crisis of 1832-1833 is one of several key topics discussed in great detail in Jon Meacham's recent book on the presidency of Andrew Jackson, *American Lion*. Meacham's overriding theme is how Jackson, despite his many flaws, permanently transformed the office of the President. Through his efforts in the Nullification crisis and in closing the Bank of the United States, his frequent use of his veto powers and his crushing pirates in Malaya who attacked American ships, Jackson brought considerable new powers to the Executive Branch. "He moved the White House from the periphery of government to the center of national action, articulating a vision of change that challenged entrenched interests to heed the popular will – or face his formidable wrath."

Meacham also presents a close study of Jackson's personal life, his close relationship with his wife Rachel, his devotion to his nephew and advisor, Andrew Donnelson, his wife Emily and their children, and his close circle of advisors, the most important of whom was his successor, Martin Van Buren. Meacham devotes a huge amount of space, perhaps too much, to the Eaton affair that so troubled so many politicians and socialites in Washington during the first Jackson administration.

Meacham has presented a very detailed, well-researched and superbly written study of Jackson that gives us not only an excellent understanding of Jackson, but also the evolution of the modern presidency.

Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina, *Mr. and Mrs. Prince: How an Extraordinary Eighteenth Century Family Moved Out of Slavery and Into Legend*. New York: Amistad, 2008.

When one discusses the topic of slavery in America, one might automatically think of deep South plantations, but the reality of slavery in the early history of this country is that it was nationwide. Providence, Rhode Island was in fact one of the major ports of entry for slave ships in the 1700s and many Africans were auctioned off there. Families in every major New England city and town in the 1700s had slaves, but there was a big difference in the way that they were treated in Staunton Virginia, or elsewhere in the South and their prospects of gaining their freedom and becoming respected citizens in their community.

Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina, Professor of English and Biography at Dartmouth College, has produced a meticulously researched and beautifully written study of two Afro-American slaves, Lucy Terry and her husband, Abijah Prince. They lived the balance of their lives in Deerfield, Massachusetts, but, after getting married and obtaining their freedom,



became early proprietors and settlers in Guilford, Vermont, where they spent the last fruitful days of their lives. Lucy Terry is more famous than her husband because of her broad education and her ability as a poet. She is today recognized as the first African-American poet and her poem, "The Bars Fight," an account of the 1746 Indian attack on Deerfield, is a classic of early American literature.

Gerzina portrays the condition of African-Americans in the North as being significantly better than in the South. African-Americans, including slaves, were welcome to attend church services with whites in Deerfield, and their children could attend school with white children. While many African-Americans were enslaved and had to suffer the humiliation of being bought and sold at the whim of their owners, a large number obtained their freedom. Free African-Americans enjoyed the same civil rights as whites and could own land, run their own businesses, and even hold local political office. There were also cases of inter-racial marriages that were accepted by society at large. At the same time, they also experienced considerable discrimination from some whites and there were many instances where African-Americans committed suicide out of despair.

Lucy and Abijah Prince accomplished a lot in life, given the period. Lucy worked freely as an innkeeper and got an education that permitted her to become a published poet. Her husband, Bijah, as he was commonly called, was considerably older than Lucy. Born in 1706 as a slave, he gained his freedom as an adult, lived a good life in Deerfield, fought in both the French and Indian War and the American Revolution and married Lucy in his early fifties. After their marriage they acquired property, raised a brood of children, and later moved to Guilford where in old age they ran a successful farm with the help of their many children. While in Vermont they faced challenges to their deed of ownership of land and considerable harassment from a wealthy white neighbor and his gang of roughnecks, but instead of fleeing, they asserted their rights in court and won.

Professor Gerzina's book, however, is much more than just a story about African-Americans in the north two centuries ago. She also describes in great detail how she and her husband spent seven years searching through numerous archives and libraries to reconstruct the lives of the Prince family. Thus, this work is as much about how one does thorough historiographical research as it is about whites and blacks in Massachusetts and Vermont more than two centuries ago.



Index

Symbols

51st Virginia Infantry 75, 76, 78
51st Virginia Infantry Regiment 75
7th U.S. Cavalry 78

A

Abney, William A. 58
Adams, John Quincy 57
African-American CCC companies 82
African-American community 101
African-American poet 106
African-Americans 106
Afton Mountain 74
Alabama 59
Alexandria, Va. 20
American Psychiatric Society 100
American Revolution 23
Anderson, Joseph 68, 71
Anglo Irish country house 6
anthracite coal 68
Antietam, Battle of 35
Appomattox Court House 78
Armentrout, George W. 46; Jacob 47
Armentrout papers 46, 49
Army of Northern Virginia 76
Atlanta 38
Augusta County
 49, 58, 61, 65, 74, 100
Augusta County furnaces 67, 72
Augusta County Historical Society
 54, 55; banquet 5

B

Baldwin, Briscoe 58
Baltimore & Ohio Railroad 75
Baltimore, Maryland 55, 77
bar iron 65
Barbour Democratic Convention 55
Barbour, James 57, 60; John Strode 60;
 Philip J. 57; Philip Pendleton 55,
 60
Bardstown, Ky. 60

Beckwith, Robert Todd Lincoln 24
Berks County, Pa. 23
Black, Jeremiah S. 9
Bland, Larry 104
blast furnace 61
Blue Ridge Mountains 46, 61
Blue Room, White House 10
Bond of Iron 73
Boone, Daniel 49
Booth, John Wilkes 1, 3, 27
bootlegger 46
bosh of the furnace 64
Brady, Mathew 12
Bridgewater College 23, 28
Bridgewater, Va. 42
Briscoe, Dolph 43
Brown, Katharine 2
Bruce, Kathleen 72
Buchanan, James 9, 19
Buffalo Gap Furnaces 72
Bulkley, Robert J. 82

C

Calhoun, John C. 55
Camp David 20
Camp Goshen 85
Camp Rattlesnake 80-94; archaeologi-
 cal remains 92; mess hall and
 barracks 84; sports 84, 86
Camp Roosevelt 81
Canada 52
Canada Furnace 67, 72
cast iron 61, 65
casting floor 64
Cedar Creek 61
Cedar Creek, Battle of 38, 76
charcoal 61, 62
Charleston Harbor 9
Charleston, S.C. 105
Chattanooga 76
Chicago 43
Chickamauga, Battle of 15
Civil Rights Amendments 41
Civil War 5-22, 26, 28, 68



Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) 80;
camp facilities 81; occupational
training 81
Clarke, Samuel 58
Clay, Henry 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 105
Clayton Mill Creek Road 90
Cole, Olen 93
colliers 62
Colonial Williamsburg 61
Confederate capital 4; iron supplies 69
Confederate Hospital, Chimborazo 78
Congressional Cemetery 60
conscription 35
Cooks Creek, Dayton, Va. 23
Cooling, B. Franklin 79
Cooper, William J. 56
Copperheads 37
Corcoran, William W. 17
corn shucks 48
Cotopaxi Furnace 50, 67, 72
Crawford Republican 60
crucible 64
Cumberland River 76
Custer, George Armstrong 74, 77
Cuthbert, Mary Ann 18

D

Dartmouth College 106
Davis, Dr. James A. 79; Jefferson
11, 96
Dawson, John 60
Deerfield, Mass. 106
Deerfield Ranger District (National
Forest) 81, 85
Democratic Party 35, 55
Dew, Charles B 73
Dix, Dorothea 100
Dolph Briscoe Center for American
History 43
Donaghe, W.W. 58
Donahey, Vic 82
Dry River Ranger District (National
Forest) 81
Dublin, Ireland 6
Duffie, General 71
Duke of Leinster 6
Dutch Inn 44, 48

E

Early American Industries Association
61
Early, Jubal A. 74, 78
East Portico, U.S. Capitol 10
East Room, White House 21
Edward Albert, Prince of Wales 16
Elizabeth Furnace 67, 72
Elizabethtown, Ky. 24
Ellsworth, Colonel 20
Emancipation Proclamation
18, 26, 34, 37
Estiline furnace, Augusta 67, 72

F

Falling Creek 61
Fechner, Robert 82, 87, 91
Fench, Benjamin Brown 13
Fillmore, Millard 12
firebacks (iron) 64
Fishburne & Son Drug Store 52
Fishburne Military School 74
Fishersville, Virginia 74, 77
Floyd, Governor 56, 105
Ford's Theatre 3
(U.S.) Forest Service 81
Fort Donelson, Tennessee 76
Fort Moultrie 9
Fourth of July 17
Franklin County, Va. 75
Free Blacks 99
free trade 55
French and Indian War 106
French, Benjamin B. 16
Friedman, Janet 73
Friel, William 67
Fullor, Earl N. 91

G

Gaines, Julius W., Jr. 101
Garber, Michael 58
Geiss, Harald 103
George Washington Littlefield Fund for
Southern History 49
George Washington National Forest
69, 81



George Washington University 51
Georgia 59
Gerzina, Gretchen Holbrook 106
Gettysburg Address 23
Gettysburg, Battle of 20, 36
Gibbs, Marney 103
Glover, A.H. 88
Goodall, Wayne 83
Gordon-Reed, Annette 97
Gordonsville, Orange County 60
Gower, Calvin W. 93
Grant, Ulysses S. 21, 11, 37, 75, 133
Great Emancipator 31
Greenstone, David 34
Greenville, South Carolina 44
Greenville, Va. 46
Grimsley, Elizabeth Todd 15
Guide to Historic Staunton, Virginia 98
gunny sacks 49

H

Hall, David T. 76
Hampden-Sydney College 74
Hamrick, Tom 52
Hanks, Nancy 24, 30
Hanna, William J. 43
Hansen, Hobart 101
Harman, Lewis 58
Harnsberger, Jere 60
Harris, Scott H. 23, 61, 74, 80
Harrisonburg, Va. 23, 42
Hay, John 6, 14
Helm, Ben 15; Emilie Todd 15, 19
Hemings, Elizabeth 98; Sally 97
Hemingses of Monticello, The 97
Herndon, Bill 30
Herring, Bathsheba 23
Highland County, Va. 99
Highland County Historical Society 99
Highland Inn 100
Hiner, Deidre 99
Historic Houses of Staunton, Virginia 103
History of the White House 5
Hoban, James 6
Holland, Josiah 30
Holzer, Harold 95, 97
'Honest Abe' 40
Honor's Voice 30

Houghton Library 100
Howardsville and Rockfish Gap
Turnpike 71
Huffer, Beth 51
Hunters Works 65

I

International Harvester Company 50
iron furnaces 61-73
iron furnace construction 62
iron ore test pits 62
iron plantations 61
ironmaking 61

J

Jackson, Andrew 8, 55, 56, 57, 105;
attitude toward Staunton 59
Jackson House Hotel 21
Jackson-Barbour ticket 57, 59
Jackson-Van Buren ticket 59
James River and Kanawha Canal 68
Jamestown, Va. 61
Jefferson, Martha 98; Thomas
13, 65, 97
Jewel of Liberty 39
John Lewis monument 103
Johnson, Charles 93
Jonesboro 101

K

Kanawha Valley 76
Keckley, Elizabeth 18, 20
Kellar, Herbert A. 43, 44, 45
Kenlan, Charles 86, 90
Kennedy, John F. 29
Kennedy's Furnace, 72
Kentucky 49
Kiddsville 102
Kyle, Robert 43

L

Lacey Spring 77
Lafayette Square 17
Lamon, Ward 30
Lane, Harriet 12, 16
Leander, Bishop, J. 68



Lee, Robert E. 75
Leepson, Marc 79
LeHand, Missy 164
Lehman, James 133; James O. 131
Leinster House 6
Lesley, P.J. 69
Lewis and Clark 159
Lewis, John 103
Lexington, Va. 44, 48, 103
Library of Congress 6
Life and Labor in the Old South 44
Lincoln, Abraham 1, 3, 4, 7, 14, 23, 24, 28, 36, 39, 75, 95; bicentennial 95; biographers 30; character 29, 14; personality 96
Lincoln bed 16
Lincoln Bedroom 13, 21
Lincoln Cemetery (Rockingham) 25, 27, 42
Lincoln Cottage 2, 3
Lincoln, David 26; Eddie 15; family 24, 28; Jacob 23, 25; John 23, 25; Mary 13, 14, 18, 20; Rebecca 23, 25; Robert Todd 6, 24; Thomas "Tad" 4, 14, 24, 27; Willie 14, 15
Lincoln Family 28
Lincoln Homestead 2, 25, 42
Lincoln landmarks 27
Lincoln Memorial 3
Lincoln Society of Virginia 2, 23, 28, 42
Lincoln: An American Memory 31
Linville Creek 23
Little Big Horn 78
Local Transportation Administrator 53
Long, David 39
Lost Cause 27
Lynchburg, battle of 76

M

Maddox, Betty 52
Maple Festival 100
Marlboro Iron Works 61, 62
Marshall, George 103
Marshall Museum 103

Marshall Plan 21, 104
Mary Baldwin College 55, 99
Maryland, University of 51
Massie family papers 49
McClellan, General George 34, 37, 38
McCormick, Cyrus 43; family 43, 44, 50; Leander 43; Robert 43, 50; William 43
McCormick Historical Association 44, 50
McDowell, James 60
McEntee, J.J. 87, 90
McGahey, Tobias 60
McKissick, James Rion 44, 47
McPherson, James 29
Meacham, Jon 105
mental hospitals 100
Métraux, Daniel A. 55
Mexican War 7, 75
Mexico 33
Mexico City 19
Michigan, University of 44
Mill Mountain 90
Miller, John 61
Mills, Nicolaus 103
Mississippi 59
Montgomery, Ala. 96
Monticello 30, 97
Morris, Rebecca Flowers 23
Morse, Debbie 100
Mossy Creek, Va. 65
Mossy Creek Furnace 61, 72
Mount Torry Furnace 65, 69, 70, 72
Mt. Jackson, Va. 76

N

nail factory, Augusta County 67
Napoleon III 11
Nashville 58, 76
National Archives 5, 85
National Republican Party 55
National Republicans 59
National Valley Bank 52
Ned, a Lincoln slave 25
Neely, Mark 31
Nelson County, Va. 49
New Deal Programs 80



New Hampshire 14
New Market 76
New Market, Battle of 76
New Salem 39
New Year's Day 17
New York City 36
New York Herald 19
New York Law School 97
Newport, Va. 101
Nicolay, George 6, 9
Nobel Peace Prize 103, 153
Nolt, Steven M. 131, 133
North Carolina 59
North River Ranger District (National Forest) 81
Notes on the State of Virginia 65
nullification 56, 57
Nullification Crisis 55, 59, 105
Nutt, Joe 103

O

Obama, Barack 95
Office of Defense 53
Old Uniontown 101
Owen, Louise 48

P

Patrick County, Va. 75, 78, 90
Patton, James 134
Paul, John 27
Payne, Ashby 74; N. Douglas, Jr. 74
Peace Democrats 38
Petersburg, Va. defense of 1, 77
Peterson, Merrill D. 30, 31, 40
Phillips Exeter Academy 14
Phillips, Ulrich B. 44, 47
Pierce, Franklin 13, 15, 18
pig iron 61, 65, 68
Point of Fork 65
Points, James 58
Poplar Camp Creek 75
Porterfield, General 58
Potter, Edmund D. 98, 99; Fred C. 53
Prince, Abijah 106
Prince of Wales 16
Providence, Rhode Island 106

Q

Queen, a Lincoln slave 25
"Queen City" 103

R

Racial Purity Act of 1930 87
Radical Republicans 36
Raine, George A. 45
Rakes, Alexander 77; Charles Jackson 75, 77; Christopher Columbus 78; Columbus 76; Richard 75, 76, 78; Thomas Tennyson 75
Randolph, John 58
Reagan, Nancy 15; Ronald 15
reaper 43
Reconstruction 36; iron production 69
Records of Ante-Bellum Southern Plantations 50
Red Room, White House 10, 20
Republican platform 96
Richard Goodchild 18
Richmond 1, 4, 11, 27, 74
Robinson, James 88
Rockingham County 2, 23, 26
Rockingham County Lincolns 26
Rocky Mount 75
Roosevelt, Franklin 80; Theodore 21
Rutgers University 97
Rutledge, Anne 30, 31

S

Salmon, John S. 62
Sarah Lawrence College 104
Sconyers, Jim 99
Scott, Winfield 19
Seale, William 2, 5
Second Corps 76
Second Inaugural Address 34, 37
Secret Service 14
Secretary of State 104
Secretary of War 57
sectionalism 9
Shakespeare 13
Shank family 42
Shenandoah National Park 81



Shenandoah Valley
23, 26, 38, 43, 62
Shenandoah Valley iron production
67
Sherando Lake 70
Sheridan, Philip 76
slavery, constitutionality of 35
Smithsonian Institution 5
social reform movements 101
soda fountain 52
Soldiers' Home 19
Sons of the Revolution 74
Sorrells, Nancy 92
South Carolina 49, 55
South Carolina, University of 44
South River, Augusta County 135
Speece, Conrad 58
Springfield, Illinois 7, 15, 21, 95
Springfield, Ky. 24
Springfield, Va. 24
St. Louis 95
Stackpole, Thomas 18
State Dining Room 11
states rights 55
Staunton, Va. 55, 58, 98
Staunton News Leader 85, 88
Stevenson, L.L. 58
Stokes, W.M., Jr. 83, 85
Stone, Phillip 2
Stonewall Jackson Hotel 5
Strasburg, Va. 77
Stribling, Francis T. 100
Stuart, Archibald 58

T

Tarbell, Ida 40
tariff legislation 56
tariffs 55, 65
Terry, Lucy 106
Texas, University of 43, 49
The Tattler 90
Third Winchester, Battle 76
Thomas Hogshead Drug Store 52
Tinkling Spring Presbyterian Church 23
Todd family 15
Todd, Mary 7
Transverse Hall, White House 11

Tredegear Iron Works 27, 68, 71
trip hammers 66
tub bellows 70
Tye River and Blue Ridge Turnpike 50

U

U.S. Department of Agriculture 80
U.S. Department of Interior 80
U.S. Department of Labor 80
U.S. Department of State 9
U.S. Department of War 80
U.S. Supreme Court 57
Union Church 102
Union Forge 65, 72

V

Valley Campaign 74
Valley of Virginia 61
Van Buren, Martin 55, 57
Vance, Mariah 31
Vermereu, Pierre 19
Vesuvius furnace 50
Vicksburg, Miss. 37
Victoria, Queen 16, 19
Virginia capitol 4
Virginia Central Railroad 77
Virginia Company 61
Virginia Gazette 62
Virginia Historical Society 50
Virginia House of Delegates 57
Virginia iron products 65
Virginia Military Institute 46, 103
Virginia Militia 76
Virginia, University of 60, 100

W

Waddell, Joseph A. 58, 60
Walnut Grove 45
War Democrats 37
Washington, D.C. 75
Washington, George 6, 29, 32
Washington season 17
Watt, John 19, 20
Wayles, John 98
Waynesboro 69, 74
Waynesboro, Battle of 74



Webster, Daniel 34
West Point 76
West Virginia 159
Western State Hospital 100
Wharton, Gabriel C. 75, 77
Whigs 58
whiskey 46
White House 5, 56, 96; Garden 5;
 re-decoration costs 16; remodeling
 5; staff 18
*White House: The History of an American
 Idea* 5
Williamson, Alexander 14
Willson Brothers Drugstore 51
Willson, Gilpin 51; Gilpin, Jr. 51;
 Percy 51
Wilson, Douglas 30
Wisconsin Historical Society 43, 50
Wisconsin, University of 50
Wood, Alice Davis 100
Wooley, D.J. 88
Woolwine, Rufus 77
Wright, Horatio 75
writ of habeas corpus 37
wrought iron 61

Y

Yale University 44, 50
YMCA 53
Yorktown surrender 25

Z

Zane, Isaac 61, 62
Zane's Furnace 61



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